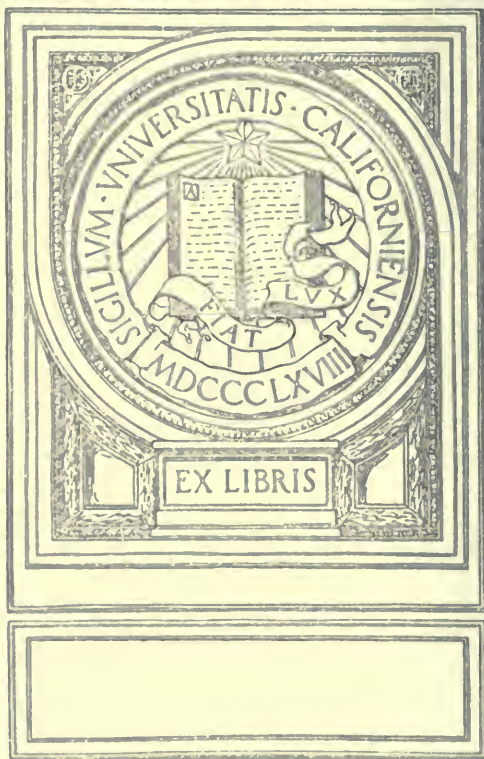


UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
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HISTORICAL SKETCHES
AND
PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS
OF
MANCHESTER.

INTENDED TO ILLUSTRATE THE PROGRESS OF PUBLIC OPINION
FROM 1792 TO 1832.

BY ARCHIBALD PRENTICE.

SECOND EDITION.

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ELIZABETH, AGNES, AND BEATRICE PRENTICE.

OF CASTLE PARK, LANARK,

GREAT GRAND-DAUGHTERS OF ARCHIBALD PRENTICE AND ALEXANDER
REID, WHO, AT BOTHWELL BRIG, IN 1679, FOUGHT IN DEFENCE
OF THE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY OF THEIR COUNTRY;

GRAND NIECES OF JAMES THOMSON, THE AUTHOR OF "THE SEASONS,"
"THE CASTLE OF INDOLENCE," "BRITANNIA," "LIBERTY," &c.;

SISTERS OF DAVID PRENTICE, FOUNDER IN 1811, AND, UNTIL HIS
DEATH IN 1837, EDITOR OF THE "GLASGOW CHRONICLE;"

THIS VOLUME IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY THEIR AFFECTIONATE COUSIN,

THE AUTHOR.

—— "Ours the triumph be
To circle social earth with fair exchange,
And bind the nations in a chain of gold."

THOMSON.



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PREFACE.

WHEN I disposed of my interest in the *Manchester Times*, and retired from its management, after twenty-three years' labour as a journalist, it was suggested that, as, for a considerable part of my life, I had taken part in movements for important purposes, a biographical memoir would be well received. The suggestion was natural enough from those who, having read my newspaper from the time they left school until they were men, taking an active part in public business, regarded me as their political teacher. My reply was, that there was nothing in the events of my life that would interest any beyond the narrow limits of a local "school;" but, on further consideration of the matter, I thought that some account of the progress of liberal opinion in such a town as Manchester, and brief notices of the part, however humble, I had taken in its formation, would be not uninteresting and not unimportant to its inhabitants, and those of the surrounding very populous district; and that there and elsewhere the history of what had been done might be an encouragement further to do.

In an interval of leisure, one of the very few that I had enjoyed in a lifetime of constant occupation, if not of

exhausting toil, I prepared some "Historical Sketches and Personal Recollections," which were published in the course of 1848, to the extent of about half of the present volume, in the paper which I had previously conducted. In another cessation of labour, towards the end of the present year, I have supplied some links of connection, and continued the narrative up to the period when the Reform Bill was passed; retaining the title, however, because the work forms less a history than a sketch which may serve for history. I might have given more interest to the volume, had I made more revelations concerning persons with whom I have held converse or correspondence, but I have been withheld by the difficulty of deciding as to what might be considered as public and what as private confidences, and have preferred to err on the side of retention; other men's feelings, with regard to publicity, having to be considered as well as my own. Almost all my statements may be verified by reference to the publications of the period, except the curious disclosures in my last chapter, with which I have been favoured by a gentleman whose character is a guarantee for their authenticity.

If there has been any ambition in my undertaking, beyond that of contributing to a plain—perhaps a suggestive—history of long-continued efforts to displace a stubborn obstruction to progress, it has been to associate my name for, it may be, a few years beyond my natural life, with

that of a locality where,—notwithstanding many sharp public contests—not, however, embittered by malignity—and some severe private struggles, the painfulness of which is now fast fading from my memory,—I have enjoyed no inconsiderable amount of quiet happiness.

I could not expect that a local history of the progress of opinion would excite more than a local interest. I find that the orders for the work, almost from Manchester alone, before its publication, amount to nearly the whole of the pretty large impression printed. I have, therefore, to announce that a SECOND EDITION will be put to press immediately, and published by the 1st of March.

Manchester, 13th December, 1850.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

To the satisfaction of having given to Manchester some sketches of what has been done as encouragement further to do, circumstances seem to promise me the additional gratification of offering the incitement in a wider field, and furnishing material, for history of a wider scope. One competent critic says, that we can never have a satisfactory exposition of the progress of England, in social ameliorations and political independence, until we have special histories of it in every important district; another, that this contribution will make some not unimportant additions to the matter from which the future national historian may glean; and another, that the work is "readable" beyond the locality within which I had supposed its circulation might be confined.

With such opinion and approval I offer this second edition to the public, with less doubt of my purpose being understood than when I put the first to press; and less as to the result of some other essay in the same direction.

Manchester, January 10, 1851.

HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

CHAPTER I.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND ITS EFFECTS.

THE terror occasioned by the revolution in France, artfully used and kept in constant excitement by persons who had a deep interest in the conservation of existing abuses, delivered Manchester over, for thirty years, to the domination of the enemies of reform, in either Church or State. The principal inhabitants of the town, for a long period had manifested, so far as they safely could, their attachment to the arbitrary and despotic principles of the Stuart family. They regarded the revolution of 1688, moderate and aristocratic in its results though that was, as a dangerous innovation. They rejoiced in green oak branches on each successive 29th of May, and indulged themselves in secret bumpers to "The King." From their talk great hopes were entertained, both in 1715 and 1745, that they would give every effective assistance in the attempts to restore the "legitimate" race; but their spirit was humbled by the speedy suppression of both rebellions; and, in process of time, the doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance, which had made them continue Jacobites, reconciled them to the remaining family, which had, in its turn, become legitimate, and had shown no great disposition to extend popular rights or religious liberty, or to innovate upon the previously existing relations between Church and King.

While the Church had a defender it mattered not much to them whether he was a James or a George ; and, until the dawn of the French revolution, which awakened a hope that every governmental institution throughout Europe was about to receive beneficial renovations, Jacobites and Hanoverians, Churchmen, and Dissenters, lived together in tolerable harmony, smoking their pipes and drinking their ale in peace and quiet converse about the progress of their new machinery and the widening prospects of manufactures and trade. Mr. Thomas Walker in his "Review" of some of the political events which had occurred in Manchester, for five years previous to the year 1794, says that the commencement of virulent party feeling against the friends of reform might be dated from 1789, when the discussion respecting the Test and Corporation Acts occupied much of the public attention. In that year the dissenters, who had, for an unusual length of time, probably from their own supineness, enjoyed release from persecution, conceived that the old spirit was dead or asleep, and that the time was favourable for a renewal of their application to parliament for the repeal of those acts. A torrent of insult and abuse was poured out upon the petitioners. "Their sentiments," said Robert Hall, writing at the period, "have been misrepresented, their loyalty suspected, and their most illustrious characters held up to derision and contempt. The effusions of a distempered loyalty are mingled with execrations on that unfortunate sect, as if attachment to the King were to be measured by the hatred of dissenters."

The clergy, however, were alarmed, or pretended to be alarmed ; and, on a sudden, the fears of those who cried out "The Church is in danger," became as wild and absurd as ever they were in the days of Sacheverell and his party. At last they became sufficiently convinced of their power to coerce opinion in Manchester, as to call a meeting of those particularly attached to their own

political doctrines, under the title of Members of the Established Church, in order "to consider of and consult about the impropriety of the application to parliament of the Protestant Dissenters to obtain a repeal of those salutary laws, the Corporation and Test Acts, the great bulwarks and barriers, for a century and upwards, of our glorious constitution in Church and State." The meeting held in pursuance of this advertisement, was called a "public meeting" of the members of the Established Church. The room was nearly filled by the adherents of the high church party before any others were admitted. To increase the solemnity, the clergy attended in their gowns and cassocks. Some opposition was made to the manner in which the meeting had been called, and the stratagem by which the room had been previously filled; and it was particularly objected, that, according to the rule which the town had adopted in the year 1788, the boroughreeve and constables had no right to call any meeting of the inhabitants, except a general one. But the clamour of the high church party was violent beyond description. They had come to act, not to argue. Resolutions, prepared beforehand, were put into the hands of the boroughreeve (not a properly elected officer, but the nominee of the Lord of the Manor), while he was in the midst of his speech, and explaining why he called the town together; and these resolutions, seconded even before they were read, were as hastily passed in the noise and confusion which prevailed. Among the resolutions thus passed was the following:—"That the religion of the state be the religion of the magistrate, without which no society can be wisely confident of the integrity and good faith of the persons appointed to places of trust and power."

The debate in the House of Commons on the Test and Corporation Acts, which gave rise to this outcry, had taken place on the 8th of May, 1789. Mr. Fox expressed

the wise axiom "that no human government had jurisdiction over opinions as such, and more particularly religious opinions," and the house so far agreed with him as to reject the motion for the repeal of those acts by a majority of only twenty, one hundred and twenty-two voting against it, and one hundred and two voting in its favour. The cry, however, of "the Church in danger" was, as it has been ever since, most powerfully influential, for on the next motion, made in March, 1790, the majority for rejection was one hundred and eighty-nine instead of twenty. Mr. Burke did his best on this occasion to frighten the house and the country. He dwelt on the destruction of the French church as a circumstance peculiarly shameful and scandalous, said that the dissenters were inducing the mob to view the wealth of the church as a better object than the bribes of election candidates, and he read a letter written by Mr. Fletcher, a dissenter, from a meeting of dissenting ministers held at Bolton, Lancashire, stating that the meeting avowed such violent principles that he would not stay, but came away with other moderate men. It described that one member, on being asked whether they meant to seek for anything more than the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, answered, in the language of our Saviour:—"We know these things which ye are not able to bear;" and on another member's asking "Give us a little light on what you intend," they informed him that they "did not care the nip of a straw for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, but that they designed to try for the abolition of the tithes and liturgy!" The house, horror struck at the declaration of these atrocious designs, decided by a majority of 294 against 105 that the church was too much in danger to allow of any concession to the conscientious scruples of dissenters. In those days loyalty was as prevalent as attachment to the by-law-established church. Mr. Walter, the editor of the *Times*, was tried and convicted for libel in saying that the Dukes

of York, Gloucester, and Cumberland were insincere in their professions of joy for the King's recovery, and ere his sentence had expired, he was brought from Newgate and sentenced to pay a fine of £100 for a libel on the Prince of Wales, and the like sum for one on the Duke of Clarence. The pulpit was arrayed against the press—and the pulpit had the best of it. It was ten thousand against ten.

The formation of "a Church and King Club" in Manchester followed the defeat of the dissenters. The members wore uniforms, with the representation of the Old Church engraved on their buttons, and their standing toast, while they could stand, in their clubs and convivial meetings, was "Church and King, and down with the Rump." The men who had no old-church buttons on their coats, and who would not swallow deep potations to the downfall of the rump, driven from the society of their ultra loyal and professedly religious townsmen, resolved to form an association of their own, and hence the origin, suggested by Thos. Walker, of the "Manchester Constitutional Society," of which George Lloyd, Thomas Walker, James Darbishire, Thomas Cooper (a barrister), George Philips (the late Sir George), and Thomas Kershaw, were members. Some twenty years afterwards I used to hear the latter recount the perils of those days, and express his joy that, however little progress liberal opinions might have made, it was impossible then to get up a church and king mob. A party without a press to represent its opinions could do nothing. The two newspapers in the town, Wheeler's *Chronicle* and Harrop's *Mercury*, began to refuse communications on the side of liberty. One of them, the *Mercury*, had been always violently devoted to the high church party, and the other was easily induced to adopt the same course. Some members of the new society proposed to Mr. Mathew Faulkner, one of its members, to commence a newspaper, under the name of the *Manchester Herald*, which was

established in March, 1792, and continued spiritedly to advocate liberal principles till judge-made law and mob-lawlessness put it down in March, 1793.

In May, 1792, the Constitutional Society issued a declaration of its objects, one of which was that "the members of the House of Commons should owe their seats to the good opinion and free suffrage of the people at large, and not to the prostituted votes of venal and corrupted boroughs." The society, in this manifesto, declared that, instead of endeavouring to excite sedition, it was solicitous, "by a timely and well-directed reform of abuses, to remove all pretences for it." Within a week after the publication of this very inoderate document, government issued a proclamation against any wicked and seditious writings, "printed, published, and industriously dispersed," and earnestly exhorted all loyal subjects to guard against such attempts to disorder the peace of society; and strictly charged and commanded all magistrates to make diligent inquiry to discover the authors and printers of such "wicked and seditious writings," and to carry the laws rigorously into execution against them.

The dominant party resolved to have a meeting on the King's birthday, 4th June, 1792, to address his Majesty in approval of the proclamation. A few days before the time fixed for holding the meeting, the Constitutional Society issued an address, signed by Thomas Walker, president, and Samuel Jackson, secretary, earnestly exhorting the members of their own and similar reform associations in the town and neighbourhood to abstain from attending the meeting, which, however upright the motives of the persons who called it, would have a direct tendency at that crisis to endanger the harmony and tranquillity of the town and neighbourhood. "This precaution was but too necessary," says Mr. Walker, "for in the evening of Monday, the 4th, a considerable number of people assembled in St. Ann's-square to see some illuminations,

exhibited by two of his Majesty's tradesmen, when the crowd became very tumultuous, and assaulted several peaceable spectators; they proceeded to tear up several of the trees growing there, one of which was carried with great triumph to the dissenters' chapel, near the square, and the gates attempted to be forced open, with violent cries of 'Church and King!'—'Down with the Rump—down with it!' &c. Another tree was carried in the same riotous manner, and with the same exultation, to the unitarian chapel, in Mosley-street; fortunately, however, the doors withstood the attacks made upon them, the people were persuaded gradually to disperse, and about one o'clock in the morning the streets became quiet without any further damage." A beginning had been made, not a very formidable one, certainly, but still it was a beginning, which would show that if meddling persons like Mr. Walker would talk of reform, and would ask for the removal of religious disabilities, there was a mob ready to break their heads for any attempt to persuade people that it was possible to amend the existing laws.

There are numbers of persons now alive who recollect seeing in Manchester taverns boards stuck up with the inscription—"NO JACOBINS ADMITTED HERE." So late as 1825 there was one of them in a public-house in Bridge-street, as fine as gilding and decoration could make it, but it was removed then in deference to the change of opinion and to prevent its being burnt. The putting up of these articles-of-peace boards was part of a plan to prevent the discussion of reform principles in bar parlours. Soon after the proclamation of 1792, and to prevent a meeting announced to be held to raise a subscription for the sufferers by war in France, a tax-gatherer, accompanied by several persons employed by the clergy, went round the town to all the innkeepers and publicans, advising them, if they had any regard to the renewal of their licenses, to suffer no societies similar to the Constitutional to be held in their

houses. The publicans gave a ready response to this call. "They thought their licenses," says Mr. Walker, "of more value than our custom." They, besides, valued the custom of the jovial church-and-king men more than that of men who met to talk rather than to drink. The paper, said to be prepared for their subscription by one of the Fellows of the Collegiate Church, is too good to be allowed to perish :—

"Manchester, September 13, 1792.

"We, whose names are herunto subscribed, being licensed innkeepers and ale-housekeepers, within the towns of MANCHESTER and SALFORD, justly alarmed at the *treasonable* and *seditions* conduct of a *well-known* set of daring MISCREANTS, who have called a public meeting to be held on Tuesday next, at the *Bull's Head Inn*, in *Manchester*, for the *avowed* purpose of *assisting* the FRENCH SAVAGES, as well as with a SINCERE DESIRE of *introducing similar calamities* to the inhabitants of this HAPPY and PROSPEROUS COUNTRY, as those that now exist in France, take this very *necessary* opportunity of publishing to the towns of MANCHESTER and SALFORD in particular, and to the whole kingdom of GREAT BRITAIN in general, our *detestation of such wicked and abominable PRACTICES*.

"And we do hereby solemnly declare, that *we will not suffer* any meeting to be held in our houses of any CLUB or societies, however *specious* or *plausible* their titles may be, that have a tendency to put in force what those INFERNALS so *ardently* and *devoutly wish for*, namely, the DESTRUCTION OF THIS COUNTRY; and we will be ready on all occasions to co-operate with our fellow-townsmen in *bringing to justice* all those who shall offend in any instance against OUR MUCH-ADMIRED AND MOST EXCELLENT CONSTITUTION."

This was signed by 186 innkeepers and ale-housekeepers, afraid of losing their licenses, and anxious to secure the custom of the party which was at once the most bigoted and the most thirsty. The public-house was now a most effective auxiliary to the church—the publican to the parson, and they formed a holy alliance against the mischievous press. There was now hope that a more efficient mob might be organized than that which only tore up a few trees in St. Ann's-square; there was

the example of the four days' riots in Birmingham, and the destruction of Dr. Priestley's house and half-a-dozen others; and there was a strong disposition to read a similar "wholesome lesson" to the disloyal of Manchester. A proclamation was issued by government on the 1st of December, obviously to excite and prepare the people for war against France; and meetings were held, one in Salford on the 7th, and one in Manchester on the 11th of that month, at which it was earnestly striven to exasperate the public mind. Thomas Cooper, the barrister, had issued an admirable address on the evils of war, but it produced no effect on the roused passions of the multitude. A rumour went out that there would be a riot that evening. It was known that there would be one. Persons went from the meeting to the public-houses, which became crowded, and thence parties proceeded and paraded the streets with music before them, raising cries against Jacobins and presbyterians—meaning by the latter term dissenters—and carrying boards, on which the words "Church and King" were painted in large letters. As if by a preconcerted scheme, the various parading parties united in the Market-place, opposite the publication office of Faulkner and Birch, the printers of the *Manchester Herald*, and, amidst loud cries of "Church and King," they attacked the house and shop with stones and brick-bats, till the windows were destroyed and beaten in at the front of the house. Where were the friends of "social order" during this destruction of property? They were there encouraging the drunken mob. Some respectable persons urged upon those whose duty it was to protect life and property to do their duty, but remonstrance was unavailable. Unite, the deputy-constable, on being applied to, said—"They are loyal subjects; let them alone; let them frighten them a bit; it is good to frighten these people." This worthy then went to the mob, and clapping on the back some of the most active in the work of

destruction, said—"Good lads; good lads;" and perceiving some beadles attempting to do their duty, he said—"Come away, d—n the house, don't come near it." A gentleman remarked, in the hearing of the Rev. Mr. Griffith, who was standing looking on—"What scandalous work this is!" "Not at all, Sir," replied the reverend gentleman; "and if I was called upon, I would not act against them." One of the special constables was heard to say in another part of the town—"I'll give a guinea for every one of the Jacobins, houses you will pull down." The work was going bravely on, parson and publican doing their best. Mr. Allen Jackson went to the house of Mr. Nathaniel Milne, clerk to the magistrates (father to the present Mr. Oswald Milne), and urged Mr. Bentley, a magistrate, to preserve the peace; but he was told that it was "a scandalous, shameful, abominable business to call out a magistrate on such a trifling piece of business as breaking a few windows." Mr. Jackson then found out the senior constable, and some of the constable's company hearing the application, threatened to kick him out of doors. So the printers and their friends were left to defend the premises. "It was good to frighten such people." From seven o'clock till eleven, four several attacks were made on Mr. Walker's house. "It was good to frighten" such a man; he was to be frightened in another way soon. The Attorney-General was to take the place of a drunken mob. Mr. Walker had gathered some friends with fire-arms to defend himself; this was to be the foundation of a charge that he had obtained arms to wage war against the King! To this riot and the conduct of the authorities the attention of the House of Commons was called by Mr. Fox, when Mr. Windham, soon afterwards Minister at War, excused the magistrates and their friends, the mob, by saying—"The indignation excited against Mr. Walker was more fairly imputable to his political opinions than to his being a dissenter. It was *natural*, and even *justifiable*,

for men to feel indignation against those who promulgated doctrines, threatening all that was valuable and dear in society; and if there were not means of redress by law, *even violence would be justifiable.*" To be a dissenter and a reformer was bad enough; to be a friend of peace was worse. According to Mr. Windham, a man's house might justifiably be pulled down about his ears, if he were opposed to the now contemplated war. The law, said Mr. Windham, was open to Mr. Walker, if he felt aggrieved at the attempt to destroy his house. The law courts were indeed open—to the Attorney-General, and it was resolved that if law could not reach the offence, judge-made law should. It would be hard if parson and publican, magistrate and deputy constable, could not concoct something which would prevent his denunciation of war. It would be hard if juries could not be found in England such as those which in Scotland found Muir and Palmer, Skirving and Margarot, guilty. It would be hard if judges could not be found in England as loyal as those who presided at the Scotch trials, one of whom declared that "no man had a right to speak of the constitution unless he possessed landed property;" another, that "since the abolition of torture there was no adequate punishment for sedition; and another, that "the nation was in a fever of disloyalty, and required blood letting." When a learned prelate on the bench of bishops asserted that "the people had nothing to do with the laws but to obey them," it might well be expected that a judge could be found to make the same assertion to a packed or subservient jury.

Nearly twelve months were required to collect or to make evidence against Mr. Walker; to collect, if any could be had—to make, according to the custom of the period; and during the greater part of the time he was in almost daily expectations of being arrested, not merely for sedition but for high treason. A drunken scoundrel, named Dunn, had been found willing to swear to anything;

but there was a difficulty in finding a second witness equally disposed to give evidence "according to order." A man of the name of Pearsall was brought from Kidderminster to Manchester, and carried before the Rev. Mr. Griffith, a magistrate, son of the Rev. Dr. Griffith, also a magistrate, both of them zealous friends of "social order," and both very desirous to obtain evidence on which Mr. Walker might be convicted. We have his statement in the "Appendix to Mr. Walker's Trial," and here is the substance of it:—He was asked by the reverend magistrate if he had not seen arms in Walker's house, and if he had seen men exercised there; but as he could not say that he had, he was sent to the New Bailey prison, where he was kept from the end of June till the 9th of August, and visited there by Dunn and a mutual friend called Callaghan, who instigated him to depose to having seen arms and exercised men at Mr. Walker's, assuring him that if he would swear so, he should have a pension as long as he lived; but Pearsall refused to listen to their proposals. They assailed him again, bringing with them pipes and tobacco, and plenty of liquor; and then Mr. Justice Griffith came amongst them in their prison carouse. The reverend magistrate shook hands very familiarly with Dunn, clapped him on the back, and called him an honest fellow; ordered some more drink, and drank with them; and then finding that Pearsall could not "recollect" anything in aid of Dunn's promised testimony, committed him for trial on the charge of having, in Dunn's presence, damned the King!

Everybody knew that Mr. Walker and some of his friends were to be brought to trial, but the warrant did not come, and he learned that its service was delayed in order that his arrest might take place under circumstances the most painful to him. He sent his brother to the Rev. Justice Griffith, who told him that he had certainly signed a warrant against Mr. Walker for *high treason*, but he would not serve it until he got another witness, and

claimed some credit for having prevented Unite, the then deputy-constable, arresting Mr. Walker at the funeral of his friend Mr. Jackson's wife ! Application was also made to the Right Hon. Henry Dundas, the Home Secretary, to know when the warrant was to be executed ; to which the reply was, that there were heavy charges against Mr. Walker, and that there would be no official delay in bringing them to trial.

To the extent of high treason, notwithstanding the open threats of the municipal and church authorities, they did not venture to proceed. At the spring assizes at Lancaster, on the 2nd April, 1794, Thomas Walker, William Paul, Samuel Jackson, James Cheetham, Oliver Pearsall, Benjamin Booth, and Joseph Collier, were tried on an indictment for a conspiracy to overthrow the constitution and government, and to aid and assist the French (being the king's enemies) in case they should invade this kingdom. Law, afterwards Lord Ellenborough, as Attorney-General for the County Palatine, conducted the prosecution ; Thomas Erskine, afterwards Lord Chancellor Erskine, the defence. The principal witness, well bribed and well drilled for the occasion, was the man named Dunn, who swore that he had seen men learning military discipline in Mr. Walker's warehouse, shouldering muskets with fixed bayonets in a room, the roof of which was not seven feet high ; that he had heard Mr. Walker say,—“ We shall destroy the constitution by and by ;” that he had seen all the prisoners there ; that he had heard Paine's work read aloud ; that he had heard Mr. Paul damn the king and all kings ; that he had heard Mr. Walker damn the king and all kings ; that he had heard Collier damn the French king, and wish all kings were served as he was ; and other testimony to a like effect. The fellow's evidence was proved to be false, and it was also proved that he had confessed, on his knees before Mr. Walker, that the charges he had brought against him were false, and that

he had been bribed to make them. Mr. Law threw up the case. "You have acted very properly, Mr. Law," said Mr. Justice Heath. The jury immediately gave their verdict—"Not guilty," and the prosecutions against the other defendants were all withdrawn. Mr. Vaughan, one of the counsel for the defence, applied that Dunn might be committed. "We will undertake to prosecute him for *perjury*," said Mr. Erskine. Mr. Walker's reply to a subsequent remark of the Judge is too manly and memorable to be omitted:—

Mr. Justice Heath.—Let Dunn be committed; and I hope, Mr. Walker, that this will be an admonition to you to keep better company in future.

Mr. Walker.—I have been in no bad company, my Lord, except that of the wretch who stands behind me; nor is there a word or an action of my life, in which the public are at all interested, that I wish amended or undone, or that, under similar circumstances, I would not repeat.

Mr. Justice Heath.—You have been honourably acquitted, sir, and the witness against you is committed for perjury.

On the 29th of October, 1794, six months after the acquittal of Mr. Walker and his friends, the Judges, under a special commission, sat at the Old Bailey, London, to try twelve persons who had been committed under a charge of high treason. Mr. Hardy's trial came on first, and the Attorney-General, Sir John Scott (afterwards the Earl of Eldon), stated the case, in a nine hours' speech, and endeavoured to prove the charges by the evidence of two government spies, Taylor and Gosling. Erskine, who had so ably and spiritedly defended Thomas Walker, and Gibbs, afterwards notorious as Sir Viccary Gibbs, were employed for the defence. After a trial of seven days, Hardy was pronounced "Not guilty." Eleven days elapsed ere John Horne Tooke was put on his trial. He had summoned Pitt, the pilot who was afterwards to "weather the storm,"

to show that the doctrines and practices of the reformers in 1794 were precisely those which himself had advocated in 1780. The minister attempted to evade a confession of his former principles and doings on the plea of forgetfulness; but Sheridan, also summoned as a witness, having manfully avowed and justified his own share in the proceedings of that period, Pitt felt himself compelled to correct his evidence, and admit that he was present at the meetings of delegates from several counties, convened for the attainment of parliamentary reform. The jury, amidst loud acclamations, pronounced a verdict of "Not guilty." John Thelwall was next put upon his trial and acquitted. The government, thus foiled in its attempt to establish cumulative and constructive treason, by evidence obtained under an odious and detestable system of espionage, abandoned the remaining prosecutions.

Thomas Moore, in his "Life of Sheridan," says:—"The severity of the sentences upon Muir and Palmer, and the daring confidence with which charges of high treason were exhibited against persons who were, at the worst, but indiscreet reformers, excited the apprehensions of even the least sensitive friends of freedom. It is, indeed, difficult to say how far the excited temper of the government, seconded by the ever-ready subservience of the state lawyers and bishops, might have proceeded at this moment, had not the acquittal of Tooke and his associates, and the triumph it diffused throughout the country, given a lesson to power such as England is alone capable of giving, and which will long be remembered, to the honour of that great political safeguard—that life-preserver in stormy times—the trial by jury." There can be no doubt, however, that these prosecutions did create much terror. To run the risk of a trial for high treason, or for seditious conspiracy, on suborned evidence, was, to most persons, no trifling matter, even where there was full confidence in the firmness and clear-headedness of juries. There were few persons who

could undergo such an ordeal with the cool indifference and the gaiety of John Horne Tooke. There were desertions from the cause of peace and reform everywhere, and not a few in Manchester. The protest against war was almost confined to a few members of parliament, who availed themselves of their privilege of speech to say what others dared not utter. Many reformers became whigs, and many whigs became nothing. The atrocities of the French revolution had furnished the excuse for desertion of their principles. An able French writer says :—" From the time of the ministry of Lord North, societies were formed in order to petition for modifications of the representative system; and the great mob of London, in revealing a hidden danger, had made the aristocracy draw closer its ranks. Then came the French revolution, which completely banded together men who had to dread every change that might precipitate them from the top to the bottom of the social state. At the report of the sanguinary victories of Jacobinism, all parties were thrown into consternation, and the violence of the threats then directed against authority was such, that all the recollections, attachments and hatreds which had previously divided the higher classes were hushed. In the House of Peers, the majority of the great families—the Portlands, the Fitzwilliams, the Spencers, and the Loughboroughs—deserted the cause of the people. In the House of Commons, Windham, Burke, Anstruther, Gilbert Elliott, and a number of other eminent persons, left the benches of the opposition. In vain did their old friends pursue them with sarcasms, and apply to them the most cutting and contemptuous epithets; the blow was struck, the whig party was rent asunder, and if it did not lose all influence in public affairs, it was indebted for this to the splendour of the talents of Fox, and the prudent sagacity of Lord Lansdowne."

Plausible excuse was not wanting for desertion of prin-

ciple, and especially little wanting in Manchester, always distinguished for its attachment to the cause of "legitimacy." The hundred hours' massacre had taken place. One thousand and eighty-nine prisoners had been brought from their prison cells in Paris, and piked or sabred in the open streets. The Princess Lamballe had suffered: "She shivers back at the sight of bloody sabres, but there is no return; that fair head is cleft with the axe,—the neck is severed; that fair body is cut in fragments, with indignities and obscene horrors which human nature would fain find incredible." "That a shriek of inarticulate horror," continues Thomas Carlyle, "rose over this thing, not only from French aristocrats and moderates, but from all Europe, and has prolonged itself to the present day, was most natural." Another shriek of horror arose when Louis XVI. was executed, not by the infuriate mob, but by deliberate judicial sentence; and another when Marie Antoinette was led to the scaffold; and all England's chivalry was roused to revenge the wrong to royalty and beauty. George the Third is recorded to have said,—“If a stop be not put to French principles, there will not be a king left in Europe in a few years;” and the nation joined in his fear of such a calamity. There was scarcely need for Attorney-General prosecutions, espionage, or suspension of the *habeas corpus* act. The war spirit was kindled, and it flamed up as fiercely as king, or aristocracy, or church could desire. The war was decidedly popular; if it had not been declared, the people would have used compulsion to have it declared.

The nation had prospered; it had recovered from the effects of the American war; it had grown fat, and it kicked. In February, 1792, Mr. Pitt drew a most glaring picture of national prosperity, proposed the repeal of some of the most burthensome imposts, and said there never was a period when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably anticipate a durable peace than at that moment. In less than a year a war was declared which

lasted twenty-three years, during all which period the blood of Europe was poured out like water, and treasure wasted as if it were dust; England's share in the cost of murder amounting to twelve hundred millions sterling. The grand result was that France regained a banished Bourbon to ensure her permanent peace, and England received a new corn-law to enable her to pay the interest of the enormous debt she had incurred in the contest! There was not even

the apology for this wanton waste of life and treasure that any aggression had been committed by the French people against this nation. It was a war undertaken solely to put

down opinions. On January 28th, 1793, the king, in his message to parliament, informed them that he had determined to augment his forces, "for supporting his allies, and for opposing *views* of aggrandizement and ambition, on the part of France, *at all times* dangerous to the interests of Europe, but particularly so when connected with the *propagation of principles* subversive of the peace and order of society;" and yet the war was popular soon after and long after its commencement, especially in Manchester.

The Thomas Walkers, the Thomas Coopers, and the Thomas Kershaws no longer needed to be held down by the hard hand of the law; they were held down by the harder hand of their fellow-townsmen; insulted, grievously wronged, without either remedy or the power of retaliation. The state of society here was favourable to this tyranny of opinion. Much of the social intercourse between the inhabitants took place in public-houses; the bar-parlour was the resort of all the tradesmen of an evening. One of these places of meeting for conversation was described by Dr. Aiken as the resort of some of the most respectable inhabitants of the town, who met every afternoon to enjoy their pipes and their glasses; and we are told that John Shaw, the landlord, was a great favourite with the ladies, who often drank his health, because he most relentlessly shut up his house at a certain early hour every night, and thus

sent husbands and fathers soberly home to their wives and families ; whereas, in the other taverns they were permitted to sit late and drink deeply. The picture gives us no very exalted idea of the refinement of the period.

John Shaw's bar-parlour soon became a Church and King club-room, and from every other such place of resort, "Jacobins" and "Dissenters" were excluded. We have seen that there were one hundred and eighty-six places of public concourse, into any one of which had a reformer or a friend of peace intruded himself, he would have been regarded as belonging to "a well-known set of daring miscreants," whom grossly to insult or assault would only be a proof of loyalty, religion, and manhood. There were then no neutral news-rooms,—no Royal or Mechanics' Institutions,—no Lyceums, no Athenæums. Even in the assemblies for music and dancing the "Jacobin" and his wife and daughters were liable to insult and vulgar abuse. The reformers were excluded from all society but that X
around their own firesides, and even there they had carefully to guard against the introduction of the insidious spy ; and in business transactions, none who could help it would deal with them. Throughout Lancashire the same coarse manners and intolerant spirit prevailed, though in different degrees. At Liverpool, comparatively refined Liverpool, about a dozen gentlemen, amongst whom were William Roscoe, Dr. Currie, and the Rev. William Shepherd, had been in the habit of meeting once a fortnight for literary discussion. "Even this peaceful and unoffending company," says Roscoe's biographer, "was not exempt from the violence of party feeling. Upon the appearance of Mr. Pitt's proclamation against seditious meetings, and the consequent odium in which all who professed liberal principles were involved, the Literary Society found their meetings viewed with such jealousy and suspicion that it was thought proper, for the time, to discontinue them, nor were they afterwards resumed." Mr. Roscoe, writing to Lord Lansdowne on

the subject, says :—" Under the present system every man is called to be a spy upon his brother." The biographer of Lorenzo di Medici, and of Leo the Tenth, the biographer of Robert Burns, the biographer of Poggio Bracciolini could not meet in comparatively liberal Liverpool, to enjoy a few hours of literary discussion before supper ; and yet several highly respectable merchants, to escape from the insults and persecutions they had to endure in Manchester, sought relief by removal to Liverpool.

Thomas Walker deeply lamented the many defections from the cause of reform. He was a man of strong mental courage himself, and entertained a firm conviction that by boldness, perseverance, and union amongst reformers, the progress of liberal principles would have been onward until they became triumphant. At the conclusion of his " Inquiry," he says he is convinced,— " That the dissenters of this kingdom have been at the commencement of almost every subject of liberal discussion of late years. But, however consistently and disinterestedly many of them have acted, they have, as a body, constantly fallen short of their own principles ; they have excited opposition, which they have never completely supported ; and through fear, or some other motive, they have been so strongly the advocates of an *overstrained moderation*, that they have rather been the enemies than the friends of those who have ventured the most and effected the most for the rights of the people. That almost all the attacks upon individuals, which the enemies of liberty have directly or indirectly ventured upon, and which have kept in the back-ground so many men of good intentions, but whom *an excess of caution*, or a timid kind of prudence, has prevented from acting, has been owing to the want of steadiness and concert amongst the friends of liberty themselves. The timid desert the bold, till the bold become cautious of supporting each other with their presence, and unable to do so with their property. That neither the

Birmingham riots, nor the Manchester riots, nor the Nottingham riots, nor the prosecutions, public or private, which have taken place, would have happened, *had not the timidity and want of union amongst the friends of freedom emboldened their enemies.* Temper and moderation are truly valuable ; but the professionally temperate and moderate men have been the first deserters from, and have uniformly done infinite mischief to, the rights of the people. That men who mean to do good, must not look for their reward, or the effect of their exertions, during the existing generation. Such an effect they may, indeed, live to see, but it cannot be counted upon. Those who are not capable of acting upon this hazard, are not the men upon whom the public can fully depend ; or who can pursue a great plan of public utility with satisfaction to themselves." Mr. Walker's observations on the timidity of reformers and dissenters are not much less applicable in this year, 1850, than they were in 1794, and may have yet to discover that the boldest policy is often the most prudent policy. It is quite possible that his son, as a magistrate, may yet have to sign warrants of distress for non-payment of a church-rate in Manchester. A peaceable submission on the part of the dissenters, for seventeen years after Mr. Walker's comments upon their timidity, was rewarded by a kick from Lord Sidmouth, which taught them that, to retain even the share of liberty they possessed, they must energetically demand those which were denied to them.

CHAPTER II.

THE WAR AND ITS EFFECTS.

MR. WHEELER, in his "History of Manchester," has recorded proofs of the "patriotism," as he, no doubt, regarded it, of Manchester at the commencement of the war with France;—the insanity as many acknowledged it to be who lived to experience the results of the contest into which the nation so eagerly entered. He commences his description of the various stages of that war fever with the admission:—"This year (1793) was one of disquietude from commercial distress. The number of bankruptcies was nearly trebled, and popular discontent ran so high that it was necessary for light troops to parade the streets with torches throughout the night. It was said that during this and one or two succeeding years, not less than twenty thousand persons had gone from the town to join the army, but the number was, no doubt, exaggerated." Proof of discontent there was, and proof of poverty, but greater proof of the prevalence of a pestilent war spirit. The men who enlisted might be partly out of employment from the depression of trade; but at the same time they were persuaded that the country required their services, and that to "fight the French" was the highest patriotism. The ardour to serve in the cause of the constitution and the country, says Mr. Wheeler, was very great. It is mentioned, for example, in March, 1749, that "Le Gendre-Starkie, Esq., has given £105 towards raising the bounty given to recruits, five guineas a man, and others are following the example." "Harvey Aston, Esq., one of the intimates of the Prince, is engaged in recruiting in this country; he and nine others have undertaken to raise each one hundred men." "Thomas Leigh, Esq., of Lyme,

proposed to raise six troops of Cavalry, and did so in fourteen days." In April, 1794, "the regiment of Independent Manchester Volunteers was incorporated in the 53rd, or the Duke of York's Brigade, as soon as it arrived at Chatham." "His Majesty has been pleased to grant the title of 'Royal' to the regiment now raising, with an 'official promise' that the 'Royal Manchester Volunteers,' if reduced, shall come to Manchester to be disbanded." On the 10th of May, a *feu-de-joie* was fired in St. Ann's-square, on account of advantages gained by the combined armies: six hundred and thirty stand of arms were sent from the Tower for the Manchester Volunteers. The success of Lord Howe, off Ushant, was announced at the Kersal Moor races, and assembled thousands received the intelligence with loud cheers: in the evening it was communicated to the audience at the Theatre by Mr. Ward, in the character of the Busy Body, and the audience shouted with exultation. In August, £500 were given by Lord Stamford for additional bounties to landsmen and seamen entering the navy; and on the 21st of the same month the Royal Manchester Volunteers were inspected by Major-General Musgrave. Colours were presented to the regiment in St. Ann's-square, after which it marched to Liverpool to embark for Ireland: it subsequently became the 104th regiment. In October a subscription was obtained for raising a Fencible Corps for the County of Lancaster. The Loyal Association in Manchester and Salford formed themselves into a corps for the home defence. "The war, however, was not universally popular: in 1795 a petition was sent from the town praying for peace." There was dissatisfaction, but it scarcely found an audible utterance.

Mr. Wheeler interrupts his narrative of the progress of the military fever, or rather continues it, unconsciously of the conclusions to be drawn, by saying:—"In November in that year, the National Committee appointed to inquire into the high price of corn, announced that the importation

of foreign grain was desirable, and that to encourage it a liberal bounty should be offered. They also stated, that though the harvest generally was abundant, there was a deficiency of the wheat crop, and therefore the mixture of other grain with it was desirable. Handsome premiums were given to farmers bringing the largest quantity of provisions to the market. In addition to the sufferings from want, an epidemic fever was raging, and it was proposed, therefore, to erect fever wards. In February, 1796, the boroughreeve, clergy, and others, publicly pledged themselves, in a series of resolutions, to reduce their use of wheat flour at least one-third. Commercial distress pressed so heavily upon the people, that though they were relieved as far as possible by subscriptions and other means, their privations drove them to occasional acts of violence, which required corresponding precautions by the authorities. On the 31st of July an order was issued that all public-houses be closed by seven in the evening, and all private persons appearing in the streets after nine o'clock were compelled to give an account of themselves. On the 29th, several gentlemen being employed in examining the weights in the potato market, a disagreement arose between the spectators and the market dealers. A tumult ensued; the people began to break windows, and the light troops were called in. The soldiers, after riding quietly but ineffectually amongst the people, were ordered to gallop through the midst of them, and they were thus dispersed. They assembled again in the morning at New Cross and in Newton-lane. Several loads of meal were seized and thrown away. On the arrival of the military and the magistrates the rioters returned home without doing any further mischief. On the 18th of November an address was presented from the delegates of all the Loyal Associations in Manchester and Salford, congratulating the King on his escape from the blow of a ruffian who had attempted his life on his way from the House of Peers.

At this time, by general agreement, pies and puddings ceased to appear on the family table, in order to lessen the consumption of flour. Such soldiers as could be spared from duty were commanded to assist the farmers in thrashing out corn." Glory and want went hand in hand; splendid reviews and meal mobs were contemporaneous; and loyalty continued to characterize one class of the community, while poverty was crushing another.

At the close of the year, continues Mr. Wheeler, resuming his account of the war fever, a most respectable meeting was held, "to take measures for preserving liberty and property from republicans and levellers." Patrols were formed in the town shortly afterwards. Early in 1797 the first regiment of Royal Lancashire Volunteers received the thanks of his Majesty, conveyed through Lord Cornwallis, for their patriotic services in Ireland. In March, it is stated, the first and second battalions of the Manchester and Salford Volunteer Infantry were drawn out for the first time. This, therefore, must have been an additional new corps. In April the Lancashire and Cheshire Volunteers, the former commanded by the Earl of Wilton, offered to serve in any part of Europe. Shortly afterwards £25,953 13s. were raised in the towns of Manchester and Salford and the neighbourhood, for the support of government.

But again is the narration of military preparation interrupted to say that "in November there was a disposition to riot, owing to the high prices of corn and flour. Subscriptions to purchase articles of food, and retail them to the poor at a low rate, were liberally made." These interruptions in the history of local patriotism show that, besides the pulpit and the press, a new and more truthful teacher had come into the field—WANT. Amidst the splendour of reviews and the presentations of colours, the cry for "bread" was raised, and put down by the strong hand, again to be raised when the laurels of war were won—and found to be worthless. In October, 1795, the King, on going to open parliament,

was surrounded by an immense crowd of persons of all ranks, crying out "Bread! Peace! No Pitt!" The new teacher was at work. In November, 1796, the French prohibited the import of English manufactures, the commencement of a war of tariffs; but the new teacher had not yet made his way to the mercantile classes, for in December the loyalty loan of eighteen millions was subscribed in fifteen hours. In January, 1797, riots took place, occasioned by the enrollment of the supplementary militia. The new teacher had been amongst the multitude, showing the value of military glory. In a month afterwards the Bank of England suspended cash payments, when the country was within twenty-four hours of barter. The bank was commanded not to pay when it had nothing to pay with; and bankruptcy was called restriction!

There is a blank in Mr. Wheeler's history from 1797 to 1803. There were no striking incidents to relate; but the new instructor was busy amongst the masses. Old inhabitants, of the industrial classes, shudder at the recollection of the sufferings endured in 1800 and 1801, when wheat, which before the war was at 6s. a bushel, had risen to 16s. 8d., and this without any other advance of wages than such as could be attributed to the competition for labour occasioned by the introduction of new manufactures, the result of new mechanical invention, while the wages of agricultural labour actually declined; and the poor rates, which at the commencement of the war amounted to £2,167,748, had risen to an average of £5,300,000. Mr. Hopkins, in his "Great Britain during Forty Years," says: "By the aristocracy, the clergy, the magistracy, and even the press, the war had been declared just and necessary, and the shouts at the stock exchange had been echoed by the capitalists in every part of the country. Poorhouses and jails admonished them that something was rotten in the state of Denmark—short-sighted selfishness triumphed, and the most industrious and highly productive people on

the face of the earth were doomed to bring into existence, in abundance all that is necessary, for the support and solace of man, only to have it abstracted by those around them."

Popular discontent continued to increase, and even those who had urged on the war began to think that the glory did not compensate for the commercial depression, the scarcity, and the heavy pressure of a war taxation. Peace had become desirable, and, to permit its attainment, Pitt retired from office; and in October, 1802, the war terminated—for a time—having cost £284,000,000 beyond what would have been required, had the country remained at peace, and occasioned the loss of half a million of human lives!

The peace negotiated at Amiens was of short duration. France complained that England retained Malta and other war-acquired possessions, in contravention of the treaty; England complained that the conquest of France would disturb the "balance of power" in Europe. There was still a strong war party in England. The deadly contest was recommenced, and, notwithstanding all the sufferings experienced by the English people, Buonaparte made it popular by his threats of invasion. The national combativeness was roused; and, in spite of all previous teachings, this country rushed into the contest with an animosity which nothing seemingly could satisfy but the utter extinction of its "natural enemy." In this renewed madness Manchester largely participated. Mr. Wheeler, resuming the history of its "patriotism," tells us that on the termination of the peace, meetings were immediately called, arrangements for military bodies made, and subscriptions entered into with zeal and liberality. A general meeting of the lieutenancy of the county (Lord Derby in the chair) was held in Wigan, in obedience to the King's command, to assist in carrying into effect the "law to enable his Majesty more effectually to provide for the defence and security of the town during the present war." Schedules were sent to the various officers in the towns throughout

the country, desiring them to make, without delay, returns of the inhabitants, cattle, and stock within their jurisdiction; the clergy and gentlemen were requested to give their assistance in furnishing the returns, and the county was divided into eight parts, each portion being superintended by a lieutenant. Manchester constituted the sixth division, and was placed under the charge of John Leaf, Esq. A meeting was immediately convened to consider the best means of assisting in the defence of the country, and it was agreed to accept the offers of James and John Leigh Philips, Esqrs., to re-establish the voluntary corps, and also to support the proposal of Joseph Hanson Esq., for the formation of a volunteer rifle corps, to furnish their own accoutrements, serve without pay, and march to any part of Great Britain. A subscription was raised to defray the various expenses, and the sacrifice of "lives and fortune" became the daily offering.

On the 27th of July, 1803, we are told, a meeting of the lieutenancy was held to receive the returns. The assembly expressed satisfaction at the number in Lancashire who were willing to aid the cause; at the same time they lamented that so large a proportion should have offered themselves as guides and pioneers, but more particularly as conductors and drivers of cattle—a number infinitely larger than could be required for those purposes. No doubt they thought that the place of safety was with the cattle. In the mean time, by command of his Majesty, Lord Hobart forwarded to the Earl of Derby particular instructions for raising, training, and clothing the various military corps to be formed in the county. On the 16th of August Lord Hobart signified that his Majesty had accepted the offered service of the regiments commanded by colonels Ackers and Philips, intimating at the same time that the title of "Royal" could no longer be permitted them, and that allowanees of twenty shillings per man for clothing, and one shilling per diem for twenty days' drill, would be issued

to the commandants, to be by them applied as they deemed most beneficial. In little more than a week after the royal communication was received, the regiments numbered two thousand men. Those who were debarred from appearing in the field freely opened their purses, and the sum of £22,000 was raised in a very short period in Manchester alone. "The subscriptions in the neighbouring towns reflected equal credit on their respective inhabitants." Amongst the foremost contributors were: Sir Robert Peel, £100; the Hon. Mr. Percival, £100; R. Peel, jun., £100; Sir O. Mosley, bart., £200; Earl of Stamford and Warrington, £525; &c., &c. But the bodies of military already mentioned were not sufficient to satisfy the ardour of the inhabitants, and within a very short time his majesty was pleased to accept the services of the Light Horse Volunteers, commanded by Shakspeare Philips, Esq.; the corps of infantry commanded by Colonel Silvester; the St. George's corps, by John Cross, Esq.; and the Fourth Class Volunteers, by G. Philips, Esq.; the Hulme Volunteers, by Major Pooley; the Pendleton, by Captain Ablett; the Trafford, by Lieutenant Colonel Cooke; &c., &c. The Masons of the town formed a body, under the title of the "Loyal Masonic Volunteers." Those who, from legal exemption or other causes, did not enrol themselves in the military corps, registered their names as special constables for the defence of the town and its vicinity. Pugnaicity called itself patriotism, and took its full swing, persecuting the lovers of peace as if the love of peace were a crime.

In the madness of the men the women joined. "Nor must it be presumed," says Mr. Wheeler, "that the daughters of our land—the witches of Lancashire—took no interest in the preparations carrying on around them. Designed by nature to labour in a more retired, yet not less useful and important sphere, our fair countrywomen employed themselves in adding to the comforts, and thereby to the efficiency, of the soldiery. They entered into a very liberal

subscription to supply the troops with flannel clothing, the making of which was not entrusted to the hands of hirelings. Frequently, too, the soldiers were regaled at the mansions of the officers, the hostess being ever foremost in dealing out good English cheer to the men, thus adding to the enthusiasm of the brave by the condescension of the fair. Others presented standards and cockades of their own handiwork to the troops. On the other hand, fast days were proclaimed to supplicate the Divine blessing on the country, and were strictly observed throughout the land."

Hundreds of mothers, hundreds of wives, lived to deplore the encouragement they had given to this military fever : not for loss on the battle field, but for the slower, though not less fatal, process of dissipation. Habits of intemperance were acquired which became unconquerable. The beastliest drunkenness, the rudest manners, the coarsest swearings, the profanest oaths, were regarded as nothing more than evidence of the most loyal attachment to the crown, and the most profound veneration for the church ; and mothers and wives, in watching the wretched death-beds of men ruined in fortune, health, and character, had long to deplore, almost in tears of blood, the incitement they had given to fierce and ungovernable passions, under a mistaken notion that they were encouraging patriotism and public virtue.

The working classes were the first to experience the consequences of that general folly in which they had so largely participated. They could not enjoy the luxury of war conjoined with comfort in their cottages. They had attempted to pull down the houses of peace-loving men, and their own abodes were the first to be visited by calamity. Heavy taxation fell with peculiar severity upon them ; and in the general advance of prices, the consequence of a depreciated currency—a cheap rag currency—their wages were found inadequate to their support. Their only instruction had been, to be loyal and submissive ; their reward

for loyalty and submission was unbearable distress. They knew nothing of the circumstances which regulate wages. They believed that their employers could, if they would, increase the reward of their toil, and they asked the legislature to enforce justice to the "toiling multitudes." In the spring of 1808 they held many meetings to promote a bill for fixing a minimum rate of wages, and when they found that the masters opposed any such measure, their discontent was largely increased. A meeting of weavers was held in St. George's Fields, Manchester, on the 24th of May, and resumed on the following day with such accession of numbers as alarmed the magistrates, who, in their terror, deemed it prudent to call out the civil and military forces. There was no riot and no indication of riot, except what might be suspected of men distrusting the government and angry with their employers. Without a riot, the riot act was read, and because the people did not instantly disperse, the military—the civil force trying nothing—were ordered to clear the ground, when one of the weavers was killed, several were wounded, and others arrested. It was the 16th of August, 1819, on a smaller scale, with less fatal effect. The military did not seem to like this service, for the officers and soldiers of the 4th Dragoon Guards presented a day's pay to the widow of the poor man who was killed. In the course of the proceedings, Colonel Hanson, who enjoyed the confidence of the weavers, and was popular amongst them for the support he gave to their much desired bill, endeavoured to persuade the men to disperse, by the assurance that their interests would be cared for; and for this "interference" he was indicted on a charge of having encouraged them to riot. The trial came on at Lancaster, at the following spring assizes. Sergeant Cockell, for the prosecution, stated that 10,000 persons were assembled, and would not disperse; that Colonel Hanson, arriving on horseback, accompanied by his groom, asked Captain Trafford, who commanded the dragoons, leave to speak to

the people ; that the Captain said he should not, unless he could persuade them to disperse peaceably, but he thought the Colonel's presence would only irritate them, and begged that he would leave the field ; and that the Colonel did not instantly leave the field, but, as he rode along, the people huzzaed, and he pulled off his hat and spoke to them. The witnesses for the prosecution, a sergeant and two corporals of the 4th Dragoons, and two of Nadin's constables, swore that they heard him use expressions to the following effect : " My lads, your cause is good ; be firm and you will succeed. I will support you as far as three thousand pounds will go, and if that will not do, I will go farther." " Nadin and his faction shall not drive you from the field this day." " I am sorry your bill is lost. My father was a weaver, and I am a weaver, and I am the weavers' friend." In defence, the groom, who had attended the defendant the whole of the time, was examined, and swore that he never heard his master make use of the expressions sworn to by the other witnesses ; that when the dragoons drew their swords, his master's horse becoming restive, he slipped off, walked a little way, and then mounted the groom's horse and rode off. Mr. Stennet, Mr. Norris, Mr. C. Satterthwaite, Mr. Brierley, and other gentlemen swore to the defendant's having exhorted the people to restrain from mischief, and none of them had heard him make use of the other expressions ascribed to him.

Here was fair ground for acquittal, even had the evidence for the prosecution been all true ; for, with the exception, perhaps, of what was said of Nadin's faction, there was nothing alleged to have been said that could be interpreted into an encouragement of riot—and, be it recollected, there was no riot ; but the colonel of volunteers had been desired by the captain in the army to retire, and he had not done so instantly, and it was necessary that such contumacy should be punished. The defendant was found guilty of having " by his language and conduct encouraged to hostile

proceedings!" Judgment was delivered in the Court of King's Bench, on the 12th of May, and he was sentenced to be imprisoned for six months in the King's Bench prison, and to pay a fine of £100 to the King! Such a verdict and such a sentence only increased the discontent of the weavers and the numerous class of working men who sympathized with them. A desire was expressed to pay the fine by penny subscriptions, but this was declined, and then it was determined to present him with a silver cup, and a deputation waited upon him in prison to announce the intention. There were said to be thirty-nine thousand six hundred subscribers to this tribute—thirty-nine thousand six hundred persons thus protesting against the verdict and against the sentence. On the liberation of the prisoner and his return to Manchester, the roads were thronged with weavers anxious to celebrate his entry, but he prevented the intended demonstration by driving at a rapid rate to his residence in Strangeways Hall.

The effects of this ill-advised prosecution were long and injuriously felt. It introduced that bitter feeling of employed against employers which was manifested in 1812, 1817, 1819, and 1826, and continues, though divested of much of its virulence, to the present day. We need not speculate now as to the results, had a prudent and conciliatory course been pursued. The mischief was done; the good to be deduced from the perpetrated evil is to make it a lesson for the future. Hanson, an impulsively benevolent man, had not the knowledge requisite to make him a useful "working man's friend." Where were the men who could have reasoned with the weavers on the causes of their distress, and the remedies which they ought to have demanded? Some were frightened out of the field by the prosecutions of 1794; some, shocked by the atrocities perpetrated during the French revolution, had lost their sympathies with the multitude, and regarded a movement for increased wages as a precursor of a demand for demo-

cratic government; and many had sunk into a hopeless and selfish indifference. The management of town's affairs was allowed to remain in the hands of the self-styled "friends of social order," who swore by "Church and King," and thought that they better served God and their country by punishing the discontented than by endeavouring to remove the causes of discontent. These miserable rulers were in their turn ruled by one of their own servants, the noted Joseph Nadin, the deputy constable, an official fixtured, the master of successive annually appointed boroughreeves and constables, whose occupation as a thief taker had led him to believe that a poor man who asked what his superiors were not disposed to grant, would take it if he had the power. To this man's rule, strengthened, it is said, by seasonable loans to some of the magistracy, for he had contrived to make his office one of great profit, may be attributed much of the jealousy and hatred with which the working classes in this town and neighbourhood regarded their employers, the local authorities, and the general government of the country. For more than ten years from the period of which we are writing, this coarse man was the real ruler of Manchester, under a succession of municipal officers and magistrates, who thought they exercised a wholesome authority when, at his suggestion, they sought to repress, by every means of coercion, the rising demand for political and social rights.

Another ill-advised prosecution still more alienated the working classes from their old allegiance to the powers that were, and gave bitter effect to the writings of one who, in the most forcible English, knew well how to appeal to the feelings and the prejudices of Englishmen. William Cobbett was sentenced to pay a fine of £1,000, to be imprisoned for two years in Newgate, and afterwards to enter into recognizances to keep the peace, for a libel, reprobating the flogging of English soldiers under a guard of the German legion. This harsh sentence, for what the

public of England could not regard as a crime, and scarcely as an offence, gave additional popularity to Cobbett's writings, and nowhere were they read with more avidity than in Manchester. Loyalty also, as manifested in attachment to the royal family, was severely shaken by the exposure of the sale of commissions in the army, and even offices in the church, by Mrs. Clarke, the mistress of the Duke of York. The exposure of an impudent robbery of the public by the commissioners for the sale of Dutch ships—one of them, the Rev. Mr. Bowles, a voluminous writer in defence of religion and morality—destroyed all confidence in the administration of the finances of the country; and the conviction of Lord Castlereagh of bartering offices, and buying seats in parliament, a practice which he defended as “notorious as the sun at noon-day,” strongly directed men's attention to the necessity of parliamentary reform.

Mr. Drakard, the printer of the *Stamford News*, had commented, with honest indignation, on what he called “the most heart-rending of all exhibitions on this side hell—an English military flogging,” for which he was tried at Lincoln, found guilty, and sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment, to a fine of £200, and to give security to be of good behaviour during three years after liberation. Leigh Hunt and John Hunt, proprietors of the *Examiner*, a paper, the circulation of which was almost entirely confined to the educated classes, were proceeded against by criminal information, for having copied into their journal the article for the publication of which Mr. Drakard had been convicted and so cruelly sentenced; but they had the advantage of a London jury, and were acquitted, although Lord Ellenborough spoke of the peculiar danger, at such a time of doing anything to alienate the attachment of the army, and pointed out the circumstances of an inflammatory tendency in the publication, which he had no hesitation in pronouncing a libel. His lordship had to encounter, sub-

sequently a deeper mortification in the acquittal of William Hone ; and subsequently, also, the Hunts experienced the "glorious uncertainty" in their conviction for a libel on the Prince Regent, followed by a sentence which was obviously intended to include what was considered due to both offences.

In the early part of 1811, great numbers of weavers having been thrown out of employment in the west of Scotland, a subscription was opened at Hamilton for the relief of the destitute of that place. They, however, refused to receive it as alms, but said they would be happy to earn it by their labour ; and the subscribers agreed to expend the money in making a footpath by the side of the public road leading from Hamilton to Bothwell Brig, over the ground that had been occupied by the covenanters before their bloody dispersion by the royal army under the command of the Duke of Monmouth. In about the first newspaper paragraph I ever wrote (it was in the *Glasgow Chronicle*, conducted by my cousin, David Prentice), I made some comments on this noble resolve, which being seen by Dr. Mathew Baillie, brought from him a subscription of £20. Riding over the road some time after with a young friend of mine, on our way to my father's farm, the weavers, in whose soft hands the spade and mattock were less easily urged than the shuttle, gladly relaxed from their work, and amused themselves with saluting us with coarse jeers as we rode along. My young friend spoke indignantly of this insolence. I said—"I am glad that the poor half-starved fellows have a joke left, even if it be indulged in at our expense." I have thought of this incident occasionally when my reward for endeavours to serve the working classes has been the Lancashire groan—the most dissonant of all modes of expressing disapprobation.

CHAPTER III.

THE DISSENTERS—ORDERS IN COUNCIL.

THE working classes had been alienated from the government not less by their sufferings than by indifference to their complaints, and the harsh treatment of those who befriended them in their adversity. The dissenters were still loyal; the merchants and manufacturers, though with less vehement zeal, still supported the administration. They were to be alienated in their turn. The self-complacent, self-sufficient Lord Sidmouth, in his zeal for the interests of the church, contrived to render the government which he supported unpopular with a great portion of the community, who might still have continued submissively to bear their political disabilities, had not a new insult been offered to them. His lordship, preparatory to bringing in his famous Dissenters' Bill, moved in the House of Lords, on the 2nd of June, 1810, for returns of licenses to preach issued in the various dioceses of England since the year 1780, and he was thus enabled to make the following transcript of the different ways in which the words "minister," "teacher," and "preacher of the Gospel" were spelt by them:—

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| "Preacher of the Gopel. | Preacher of the Gosper. |
| Preacher of the Gospic. | Preacher of teacher the Gospell |
| Precher of the Gospel. | Bappist. |
| Precher of the Gospell. | Preecher of the Gospel. |
| Preacher of the Gospell. | Teacher of the Gospell of Jesus |
| Preach of the Gospell. | Christ. |
| Precher of the Gospic. | A discenting teacher. |
| Precher of Gospell. | Desenting teacher. |
| Prashr of the Goseppl. | Decenting teacher. |
| Minicster of Gospell. | Preicher of the Gospell." |

These eighteen instances of ignorance of orthography were proof positive that the licensed preachers were not "res-

pectable." To this proof was added the testimony of Dr. Barrington, the Bishop of Durham, that the sectaries "assembled in barns, in rooms of private houses, or in other buildings of the most improper kind." Sidmouth consulted Dr. Coke, "the head of the Methodists," and "completely satisfied him." "His apprehensions," says his lordship, in a letter to his brother, "are converted into zealous approbation." He consulted Dr. Adam Clarke, and satisfied him; he consulted Mr. Belsham, the celebrated Unitarian writer, and satisfied him. Thus fortified, he brought in his bill on the 9th of May, 1811. But Dr. Coke and Dr. Clarke had talked with others after they had been "satisfied," and found that they had made a mistake. Sidmouth's biographer says of a letter from Dr. Clarke: "It seems, from the learned doctor's account, that it was not the *ministers*, but the *lay members* of the Methodist connexion, who first sounded the alarm, and, by calling a *general committee*, prevented the beneficial objects of the bill from being properly explained or understood." Ah, mischievous laymen!

The Methodists took the lead in the movement against the Sidmouth bill. The Rev. Richard Watson, then of the New, and the Rev. Jabez Bunting, of the Old Connexion, had been preaching at Stockport one Sunday, and met, for the first time, on their way to Manchester in the evening, when the bill became the principal subject of conversation. "They both acknowledged," says Mr. Watson's biographer, "that if this bill were to pass into a law, it would be ruinous to the Methodists, and that it would be very injurious in its operation generally." At Mr. Jabez Bunting's request, Mr. Watson immediately wrote a letter, which appeared in the *Manchester Exchange Herald* of May 23rd. In assuming the name of a "Protestant Dissenter," he used that name in its popular sense, as that of one not in immediate connexion with the established church; not that he had any conscientious objections against a religious establishment,

as such, as he distinctly declares, or any scruples as to the lawfulness of uniting in the public services of the Church of England. At that time the dissenters were not duly alive to the evils with which this measure was fraught, and a strong statement of the case was deemed necessary to rouse their opposition, Mr. Watson, in this letter, says that the dissenters who, when the bill was first proposed, saw no objection to it, did not know its extent. "They might see little to object in requiring six householders to certify that the person applying for a license was *bonâ fide* a preacher, an approved person; but the printed bill materially alters the case, when it requires these six householders to be *substantial* and reputable persons; for as the terms convey no positive and specific idea, and as the magistrate alone must judge, where is the security that numberless vexatious exceptions may not be taken, and that the obtaining of a license, especially from a bench of clerical justices, may not become an affair of the utmost trouble and difficulty?" He asks if the insult to dissenters has been the consequence of their quiet submission: "Have we refrained from urging claims, as substantial, surely, as those of the catholics—from teasing the government from year to year—from the menace and activity of factious restlessness—only to have our moderation construed into cowardice and tameness?—only to encourage the enemies of our privileges and the enviers of our growing prosperity to make an experiment upon our patience? And are we to learn from Lord Sidmouth's conduct that the only means of maintaining our lowest privileges is to urge the highest claims with petulance and audacity?" Mr. Watson concluded his letter with an earnest exhortation to prompt and manly action. The dissenters throughout the kingdom, the baptists and independents, although they were less directly attacked, joining cordially in the movement, sent shoals of petitions against the measure, and Lord Sidmouth was compelled to abandon it in the stage of second reading. His biographer

says: "Could he, at an earlier period, have foreseen the opposition which his measure was destined to encounter, he probably would not have proposed it; but being strongly convinced of its propriety, and having received, in the first instance, so much encouragement, he would not, in obedience to a popular outcry, withdraw it at the eleventh hour; and for this decision he surely deserved to be approved rather than blamed." A similar, perhaps conscientious, obstinacy, at a later period, made him the most tyrannical home secretary that ever held office; and he pleaded conscience as earnestly in defending the employment of spies to urge the people to insurrection, as he did in defence of his scheme to make nonconformist ministers "respectable."

Merchants and manufacturers were now learning in the stern school of experience. In the month of April, 1812, in riding past the Manchester Exchange, with my saddlebags under me, I saw a crowd of persons standing looking at that building, the windows of which were broken, a partial boarding supplying the place of glass. I found that the destruction had been the work of a mob a day or two before. I was then in my twentieth year, and, earnestly engaged in my vocation as a rider or traveller, had taken no particular interest in politics. But on my previous journey, the first I had made, I had seen, with some disgust, the intolerance of the Church-and-King men of Manchester, and in the course of that four months' journey had found that the Birmingham and Manchester bagmen were rated by their fellow-travellers as the rudest and coarsest men on the road. Both towns had earned the inglorious distinction of having attempted to put down opinion by brute violence, and it would seem that coarseness of thought was accompanied by a correspondent coarseness of sentiment and manner. At my inn I soon learned how the riot had occurred, and how the tables had been turned upon those who had formerly instigated Church-and-King mobs into destructive action.

In the previous chapters we have seen that the stern teacher, WANT, had been amongst the working classes during the achievement of great national "glory." While they, who had been themselves the willing instruments in the hands of the ruling party at the commencement of the war, were suffering under the hands of the new teacher, it is not to be supposed that the commercial classes of Manchester, who had been keen instigators of the insane policy pursued by government, escaped the consequences of their own folly. When weavers were starving, merchants and manufacturers could not be prosperous. The war at the point of the bayonet was accompanied by the war of prohibitions. Napoleon had brought the continent under his yoke; but, to complete this, the commerce of England must be destroyed. His great object was to unite the continent in a league against all commercial intercourse with his great rival. Elated with having laid Prussia prostrate at his feet, the first use made of his victory was to issue his Berlin decree, dated the 20th of November, 1806, which declared the British islands in a state of blockade, all prisoners, wheresoever found, prisoners of war, and all British goods lawful prize; interdicted all correspondence with our dominions; prohibited all commerce in our produce; and excluded from the ports of France, and of countries under her control, every vessel, of whatsoever nation, that had touched at a British port. The wise course for England to pursue would have been to leave France and the neutral states, especially the United States of America, to fight it out among themselves. But the remedy was sought in retaliation. The whigs, who were then in office, set the example of folly to their tory successors. On the 7th of January they issued the first of those orders in council which, more efficiently than Napoleon's decrees, conduced to the destruction of English commerce. It declared that the Berlin decree authorized England to blockade all the French dominions, to forbid

any neutral power from entering our ports which had touched at any port of France or her dependencies, and justified us in capturing all her produce; but that we were *unwilling* to inflict such injuries on neutral nations! The order then declared, as a partial retaliation, that no vessel should trade from one enemy's port to another, or from one port to another of a French ally's coast shut against English vessels; so that, says Lord Brougham in commenting upon the order, the only chance our goods had of being spread over the continent was by getting them smuggled into some port less watched by France than the rest, and then their being conveyed from thence in all directions. The only chance we had of sending our goods anywhere, was getting them in somewhere, and then having them freely distributed everywhere. "No!" said the ministers of 1807, "let them be stopped where they are landed, and let no American think of carrying them elsewhere." The tory ministers came into office in 1808, adopted the whig order, and issued others still more stringent.

The merchants and manufacturers of London, Hull, Manchester, and Liverpool petitioned parliament against the destructive policy of the orders, craved to be heard by their counsel, and tendered evidence of the injuries sustained by them from the operation of those orders. Mr. Brougham was their counsel, and was heard at the bar of both houses, where he likewise adduced the evidence during several weeks, in support of the petitions. The ministry, however, triumphed over all the attempts then made to defeat the system; and it was not until four years after, in 1812, that, the general distress having gone on increasing, there was any chance of obtaining a more favourable hearing. In March, 1812, the subject was again brought forward by Mr. Brougham. His motion was then negatived; but, soon after Easter, he presented petitions from the same parties who had formerly been his clients; and on the motion of Lord Stanley, on the 28th of April,

THE INQUIRY.

the house agreed, without a division, to hear evidence in support of the petitions. The case was conducted every night *for seven weeks* by Mr. Brougham and Mr. Baring. The inquiry on the side of the petitioners was wholly conducted by these two members, and each night presented new objections and new defeats to the orders in council, and new advantages to the opposition, by incidental debates on petitions presented—by discussions arising on evidence tendered—by other matters broached occasionally in connection with the main subject. The government, at first, conceiving that there was a clamour raised out of doors against their policy, and hoping that this would of itself subside, endeavoured to gain time and put off the evidence. But Brougham and Baring kept steadily to their purpose, and insisted on calling in their witnesses at the earliest possible hour. They at length prevailed so far as to have it understood that the hearing should proceed daily at half-past four o'clock, and continue, at the least, till ten, by which means they generally kept it on foot till a much later hour, all but those who took a peculiar interest in the subject having earlier left the house.

The evidence brought before the house was of the most appalling description. "We have examined," said Mr. Brougham, "above a hundred witnesses, from more than thirty of the great manufacturing and mercantile districts. These men were chosen almost at random, from thousands whom we could have brought before you with less trouble than it required to make the selection; the difficulty was to keep back evidence, not to find it; for our desire to state the case was tempered by a natural anxiety to encroach as little as possible on the time of the house, and to expedite by all means the conclusion of an inquiry, upon the result of which so many interests hung in anxious suspense. In all this mass of evidence there was not a single witness who denied or doubted—I beg your pardon; there was one—one solitary and remarkable exception,—and none

other, even among those called in support of the system, who even hesitated in admitting the dreadful amount of the present distresses. Take, for example, one of our great staples—the hardware, and look to Warwickshire, where it used to flourish. Birmingham and its neighbourhood—a district of thirteen miles round that centre—was formerly but one village; I might say one continued workshop, peopled with about four hundred thousand of the most industrious and skilful of mankind. In what state do you now find that once busy hive of men? Silent, still, and desolate during half the week; during the rest of it, miserably toiling at reduced wages, for a pittance scarcely sufficient to maintain animal life in the lowest state of comfort, and at all times swarming with unhappy persons, willing, anxious to work for their lives, but unable to find employment. He must have a stout heart within him who can view such a scene and not shudder. But even this is not all; matters are getting worse and worse; the manufacturers are waiting for your decision; and if that be against them they will instantly yield to their fate, and turn adrift the people whom they still, though inadequately, support with employment.”

Yorkshire was in the same state, the manufacture of woollens being almost suspended. At Sheffield, the workmen in the cutlery trade, unable to obtain any longer their usual market, from the master dealers and merchants or brokers refusing to purchase any more, were compelled to pawn their articles at a very low valuation, for money, and even for food and clothes; so that this extraordinary state of things arose,—the pawnbrokers went into the London market with the goods, and there met the regular dealers, whom they were able greatly to undersell, in such wise as to supply in a considerable degree the London and other markets, to the extreme augmentation of the distresses already so severely pressing upon this branch of trade.

In Lancashire the distress was, if possible, still mor

severe. "I would draw your attention," said Mr. Brougham, "to the cotton districts, merely to present one incidental circumstance which chanced to transpire respecting the distresses of the poor in those parts. The food which now sustains them is of the lowest kind, and of that there is not nearly a sufficient supply; bread, or even potatoes, are now out of the question; the luxuries of animal food, or even milk, they have long ceased to think of. Their looks, as well as their apparel, proclaim the sad change in their situation. One witness tells you it is only necessary to look at their haggard faces, to be satisfied what they are suffering; another says that persons who have recently returned, after an absence of some months from those parts, declared themselves shocked, and unable to recognise the people whom they had left. A gentleman largely concerned in the cotton trade, to whose respectability ample testimony was borne by an honourable baronet (Sir Robert Peel)—I cannot regularly name him—but in a question relating to the cotton trade it is natural to think of the house of Peel—that gentleman, whose property in part consists of cottages and little pieces of ground let out to work-people, told us that lately he went to look after his rents, and when he entered those dwellings, and found them so miserably altered, so stript of their wonted furniture and other little comforts,—and when he saw their inhabitants sitting down to a scanty dinner of oatmeal and water, their only meal in the four and twenty hours, he could not stand the sight, and came away unable to ask his rent. Those feelings, so honourable to him, so painful to us who partook of them, were not confined to that respectable witness. We had other sights to endure in that long and dismal inquiry. Masters came forward to tell us how unhappy it made them to have no more work to give their poor men, because all their money, and in some cases their credit too, was already gone in trying to support them. Some had involved themselves in embarrassments for such

pious purposes. One, again, would describe his misery at turning off people whom he and his father had employed for many years. Another would say how he dreaded the coming round of Saturday, when he had to pay his hands their reduced wages, incapable of supporting them; how he kept out of their way on that day, and made his foreman pay them. While a third would say that he was afraid to see his people, because he had no longer the means of giving them work, and he knew that they would flock round him and implore to be employed at the lowest wages,—for something wholly insufficient to feed them."

The inquiry was interrupted by a lamentable event—the assassination of Mr. Percival in the lobby of the House of Commons. The victim of a madman's revenge fell into the arms of Mr. Francis Phillips, of Manchester, a gentleman of whom we shall hear something hereafter as a bitter enemy of reform, and the apologist of the magistracy and of the yeomanry, when a legally convened and peaceably assembled meeting was dispersed by the sword. The intelligence of Mr. Percival's death reached me at Newcastle-under-Lyne. A man came running down the street, leaping into the air, waving his hat round his head, and shouting with frantic joy, "Percival is shot, hurrah! Percival is shot, hurrah!" The Potteries were in a deplorable state, and oppression, which makes even wise men mad, had roused the savage nature of the half-starved. While, in the renewed inquiry into the operations of the orders in council, evidence daily accumulated of the prevalence of deep distress throughout the country, alike affecting the manufacturer and the operative, the papers teemed with accounts of the destruction of machinery, and, at times, even of life. The ministry at length yielded. On the 16th of June, when Mr. Brougham had made his motion to recall the orders, Lord Castlereagh announced that the crown had been advised to rescind them.

The deep distress, of which strong proof had been given

before the House of Commons, was not occasioned by the orders in council alone. By the profuse issues of the bank, no longer checked by the convertibility of its notes, the price of every commodity had risen, *except the price of labour*; wheat was 15s. 6d. a bushel, and every article of food proportionately high; and the enormous war expenditure had made the pressure of taxation heavy beyond all previous example. The mass of the people, especially in the manufacturing districts, felt themselves as marked out for destruction. They, in their national pugnacity, had eagerly demanded war, and they were now enduring its consequences; but a starving are seldom a reasoning people. Ordinary suffering leads to inquiry as to its real cause; but destitution directs attention only to the nearest seeming cause. Few masters could give employment, and none could give good wages; and the unemployed and the ill-paid looked upon them as oppressors. The liberal journals had been silenced by fierce persecution; and newspapers seemed to have no other vocation than to number our splendid victories, to rejoice over the destruction of hundreds of thousands of men who were called our enemies, and to congratulate the nation on the great amount of glory which it was achieving.

In the latter months of 1811 disturbances commenced in the districts of the hosiery manufacture. Many workmen had been discharged in consequence of the badness of trade, and many, as they believed, in consequence of the introduction of a wide frame for weaving stockings. Leicestershire, Derbyshire, and Nottinghamshire were first in the manifestation of a fierce and bitter spirit against employers. The actors in the riots assumed the name of Luddites, from an imaginary leader, Captain or King Ludd. In the beginning of 1812 the disturbances extended to Yorkshire, Lancashire, and Cheshire.

CHAPTER IV.

DISCONTENTS AND SEVERITIES.

IN the beginning of the year 1812, strong expectations had been indulged, that on the termination of the restrictions on the powers of the Regent, he would form an administration not unfavourable to reform. A hypocritical offer of office was made to Lords Grey and Grenville, with the full knowledge that they would refuse to reform any part of a ministry which was established notoriously to resist the emancipation of catholics from their civil disabilities. They refused the offer made to them, and the Marquis of Wellesley having resigned, the man most obnoxious to popular hatred, Castlereagh, accepted the seals of foreign secretary, and Sidmouth became home secretary. The leading men of Manchester, untaught by the results of a policy which had been most disastrous to themselves, and had brought ruin and starvation upon their humbler townsmen and fellow-countrymen, and unaware that reform opinions had been gradually creeping amongst their own class, called a public meeting, to be held on the 8th of April, in the Exchange Dining Room, to send an address of thanks to the regent for retaining his father's ministers in office—those ministers who had involved the world in bloodshed, and subjected their own country to the endurance of misery unexampled. Amongst the names subscribed to the requisition were the following:—

- T. Blackburne, LL.D., Warden, Collegiate Church.
- John Clowes, Fellow of Christ College.
- Jer. Smith, Head Master of the Free Grammar School.
- Thomas Stone, Chetham's Library.
- C. W. Ethelston, Fellow of Christ College.
- S. Hall, Clerk, St. Peter's Church.

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| John Gatliff, Fellow of Christ College. | |
| M. Randall, M.A., Curate of St. Ann's. | |
| J. Clowes, St. John's Church. | |
| Nathaniel Milne, Clerk to the Magistrates. | |
| James Ackers. | J. Silvester. |
| T. O. Gill. | Thomas Johnson. |
| Laurence Peel. | Robert Peel. |
| Edward Chesshyre. | Otho Hulme. |
| Thomas Hardman. | Dauntsey Hulme. |
| Jonathan Beevor. | John Hull, M.D. |
| George Grundy. | H. Fielding and Brother. |
| Jonathan Dawson. | William Tate. |
| Francis Phillips. | Robert Hindley. |
| Thomas Marriott. | Samuel Edge. |
| James Harrop. | C. Wheeler and Son. |
| John Leaf. | Nathaniel Gould. |

Previous to the day fixed for the meeting, some exertions were made by a few gentlemen of the town to get up an opposition to the passing of the resolutions of approval and thanks which, it was avowed, would then be proposed, and a number of placards were issued calling attention to the subject, and urging the attendance of those who objected to the intended movement. These movements seem to have alarmed the persons who convened the meeting, and they complained of the inflammatory nature of the placards issued, particularly of one headed with the words "Now or never," of which we shall hear something hereafter, when John Edward Taylor is tried at Lancaster for libel. On the morning of the 8th a bill was posted on the walls of the town and neighbourhood, stating that the meeting *would not take place*, and the assigned reason was, that the staircase leading to the Exchange dining-room was too weak to sustain the pressure that would be produced by the multitude that had been invited to attend; but, notwithstanding this announcement, numbers of persons assembled, many of them working men and boys from the country, and they very naturally congregated about the Exchange, where, at from nine to ten o'clock, they became a great crowd.

At this time the parties who had prepared the opposition to the intended proceedings met at the Star Hotel, in Deansgate, and they had to consider what course should be taken under the new circumstances that had arisen. They were in consultation on the subject when information was brought that the people who had been assembled in the Market Place and the area in front of the Exchange had forced their way into the Exchange news-room, and were destroying or damaging the furniture it contained. This news produced considerable alarm in the meeting, and after various suggestions had been made, it was agreed that, in order to avoid all appearance of countenance being given to what had been done at the news-room, the persons then present should immediately disperse, each going away separately as far as was practicable, and this was rather carefully acted on.

“On going towards the Exchange after this time,” says my informant, “I found a large assemblage of persons in St. Ann’s-square, and in the news-room a number of boys, who appeared to be enjoying their novel position in the grand room, asking each other to read the papers and tell the news, and pushing each other about towards them, and seeming to think it very good fun. They appeared to be quite harmless, and I will venture to say, that at this period, and even at any time during the first hour, a couple of men might have cleared the room, without any material difficulty, of all who had intruded. I subsequently visited the room more than once, and found the numbers of the country people in it increasing, and no attempt made to remove them. Some of the boys, apparently from a want of occupation, were pulling off each other’s hats and throwing them to a distance, to compel the owners to go for them. In the square too the assembled numbers increased, and a man was addressing many of them in the middle of the area. Mr. H. H. Birley, (afterwards to be heard of as heading the yeomanry on the 16th of August, 1819,) in

passing through the square, was rather roughly jostled, and obliged to take refuge in a shop. Still nothing was done either to satisfy the people or to induce them to disperse. The meeting, it is true, had been countermanded by those who convened it, because the Exchange stairs were weak; but this excuse was laughed at, and treated as a mere pretext, resorted to because the promoters expected to be defeated in their object, if the meeting had taken place."

"Some time after twelve o'clock," continues my informant, "I went into Salford, and while there heard that the Exchange had been set on fire. I returned immediately to Manchester, and found the windows of the news-room broken and much of the furniture—chairs, tables, maps, &c.—destroyed or damaged, and soldiers engaged in driving the crowds from the neighbourhood of the Exchange. But for about three hours large numbers of men and boys were permitted to assemble in the news-room and to resort to various tricks to amuse themselves, until at last, it was said, that a hat, thrown for mere fun, struck one of the windows and broke it; on which, many other parties seemed desirous of achieving the same feat, when a general attack was made and the windows soon destroyed. After this the demon of mischief seemed to be let loose,—the chairs, tables, maps, &c., were attacked, each individual being desirous to destroy as much as possible. But had proper means been used to clear the room before twelve o'clock, all serious mischief might have been prevented. As it was, the odium of rioting—of trying to burn the Exchange, &c. &c., was thrown on the 'jacobins,' as the opposition party were called. The writer of the placard 'Now or never' was particularly censured, and the mischief done was attributed to that document."

Old Thomas Kershaw, in lamenting to me the riot that had taken place, used, chucklingly, to add,—“But we had no Church-and-King mobs after that!” And the gentleman who has kindly acceded to my request, that he would

write down a few particulars of what he had witnessed on the occasion, concludes his narrative by saying:—"The occurrences of that day, however, indicated a turn in the current of popular opinion. Previously to that time 'Church-and-King' was the favourite cry, and hunting 'Jacobins' safe sport; but subsequently the old dominant party appeared to feel that they had an opposition to contend with, and they became less arrogant in their conduct, although the old leaven was still in them."

A food riot followed. On Saturday, the 18th, a numerous body of people, chiefly women, assembled at the potato market, Shudehill, where the sellers were asking 14s. and 15s. per load (252 lbs.) for potatoes. Some of the women began forcibly to take possession of the articles; but the civil and military power interposing, all riotous tendency was soon overawed, and a mutual agreement took place between the buyers and sellers, to fix a sort of maximum, of eight shillings per load, at which they were sold in small portions. On Monday, strong and alarming appearances of rioting took place at Aneoats, and about New Cross; a cart carrying fourteen loads of meal was stopped, and the meal carried away; a general alarm followed, and the shops in that part of the town and Oldham-street were closed. The cavalry were called in, and the multitude continued to assemble till the Riot Act was read, and the mob dispersed without further injury. The result of fixing a maximum of price, as might have been expected, was, that farmers would not bring potatoes or other provisions to market until the magistrates issued notices throughout all the neighbourhood, promising full protection to all who brought farm produce into the town.

The uninstructed multitude next directed their vengeance against machinery. On Monday a riotous assembly took place at Middleton. "The weaving factory of Mr. Burton and Sons," says Cowdroy, "had been previously threatened, in consequence of their mode of weaving being done by

the operation of steam. That afternoon a large body, not less than 2000, commenced an attack, on the discharge of a pistol, which appeared to have been the signal; volleys of stones were thrown, and the windows smashed to atoms; the internal part of the building being guarded, a musket was discharged in the hope of intimidating and dispersing the assailants; but it was found ineffectual, the throwing of stones continuing, and at the expiration of about fifteen minutes, firing of ball commenced from the factory, and in a very short time the effects were too shockingly seen in the death of three, and, it is said, about ten wounded. Here this horrid conflict terminated for that night, which was spent in dreadful preparation. The morning brought with it fearful apprehension, which apprehension was too fatally realised: the insurgents again assembled, many of them armed with guns, scythes tied to the ends of poles, &c.; the factory was protected by soldiers, so strongly as to be impregnable to their assault: they then flew to the house of Mr. Emanuel Burton, where they wreaked their vengeance by setting it on fire, the whole, with its valuable furniture, being soon in one state of conflagration. A party of soldiers, horse and foot, from Manchester, arriving, pursued those misguided people, some of whom made a feeble stand; but here again death was the consequence, five of them being shot, and many of them severely wounded. Two were found in the fields on the following morning, where they had languished and expired from the mortal effects of their wounds."

It is but just to state that the men whose names have been mentioned, as approving of the policy which had reduced the country to so wretched a state, were foremost in promoting a subscription to relieve the existing distress. Their judgment was too narrow, and their views too contracted, to enable them to trace the general wretchedness to its cause, but their benevolence directed them to the relief of that part of it which fell under their own eyes.

They would do nothing to mend the road—they would even persecute all who said the road wanted mending; but they would confer their aid and sympathy upon those who had broken down upon the rough and rutty highway.

On Friday, the 24th of April, a large body of weavers and mechanics began to assemble about mid-day, with the avowed intention of destroying the power-looms, together with the whole of the premises, at West Houghton factory. Immediate information was given to the authorities at Bolton, and the Scots Greys were instantly despatched from thence to the scene of riot, a distance of about five miles. On their arrival all was quiet, and no symptoms of disorder whatever appeared; the presence of the military was therefore deemed unnecessary, and the whole force, consequently, returned to Bolton. Scarcely had they reached their quarters ere a messenger arrived with the alarming intelligence that the whole factory was in flames. Again the military rode at full speed to West Houghton; and on their arrival were surprised to find that the premises were entirely destroyed, while not an individual could be seen to whom attached any suspicion of having acted a part in this truly dreadful outrage. During the evening, however, a partial assemblage of the most active of the rioters took place in the village, and again alarmed the inhabitants by levying contributions in meat, drink, or money, on some of the more respectable among them. Their audacity appeared to rise with the success which attended their lawless demands, and was beginning to develope itself in a more alarming manner, when, at this critical juncture, the arrival of the military put nearly the whole of the mob to flight. A few, however, of the more desperate kept their ground, upon which the riot act was read, and quiet was restored. The whole of the succeeding night was spent in collecting information of the names of those who had rendered themselves conspicuous by their activity on the occasion, and in securing their persons;

in consequence of which, twenty-four of them were, early next morning, conducted under military escort to the town of Bolton.

There was reason to believe that some of the local magistrates had employed spies, who urged on their victims to violence. Mr. John Edward Taylor, in his reply to a pamphlet published in 1819 by Mr. Francis Phillips, says:—"I have no reason to believe that the atrocity of the Middleton riots can be palliated by any attempt to prove that the tricks and machinations of hired spies had any share in producing them. They originated in severe distress, exasperated by a short-sighted prejudice against the introduction of newly-invented machinery, which the populace fancied was calculated to aggravate the sufferings they were then enduring. The attack of the mob upon the factory, and their destruction of the house of one of its owners, were crimes of the greatest enormity: much, therefore, as the consequences were to be deplored, no doubts were entertained of the legality of the conduct pursued. However humanity might grieve at the death of those who were shot by the military, justice was satisfied. But at West Houghton, where a steam-loom factory was set on fire and burnt down, the case was widely different. This outrage was debated (as appeared by evidence brought forward on the trials of the rioters) at a meeting which took place on Dean Moor, near Bolton, the 9th of April, 1812, sixteen days before the scheme was put in practice. At this meeting (which was very speedily reduced to numerical insignificance by the desertion of a considerable proportion of those who had at first attended it) there were present, during the greater part of its duration, and up to the time of its close, not more than about forty persons, of whom no less than ten or eleven were SPIES, reputed to be employed by Colonel Fletcher. On this occasion these spies were *armed*, and disguised with *blackened faces*. And when some persons wished to retire from the meeting, on

finding the wicked purpose on which it was bent, they were prevented from doing so by a *rear guard*, formed chiefly of the *armed spies*, and marched *by force* towards West Houghton, where a considerable detachment of military were in *ambuscade*, awaiting their approach. Upon this occasion the spies were provided with *white caps*, to put on when they should come in contact with the military, in order that, being recognised, they might not be hurt. But all the exertions of the spies were insufficient to enable them to carry their plan into effect, The unfortunate victims of their diabolical machinations could not, at that time, be induced to act; one by one they slunk away from the meeting, till the spies were left alone; so that when a detachment of the local militia, which was sent from Bolton, at midnight, to pick up stragglers, had succeeded in apprehending a considerable number of supposed Luddites, they were, upon examination, every man of them, proved to belong to the corps of black-faced spies, and consequently dismissed. The occurrence of circumstances like these, sixteen days before the burning of the factory took place, renders it not a matter of presumption, but of absolute certainty, that that alarming outrage might have been prevented, if to prevent it had been the inclination of either the spies or their employers. I am not aware that the truth of the preceding statements, which I have abridged from "Dr. Taylor's Letter," and which have now been before the public seven years, has ever been at all questioned. But, however that may be, I know that proof of them can be given upon oath, to such an extent as must be absolutely decisive of their veracity. At the special commission held at Lancaster, for the trial of the rioters of that period, eight persons were capitally convicted. At Chester, though fifteen were condemned to death, two only were ultimately executed. But the conduct pursued at Lancaster formed a striking contrast with this dignified lenity. *There every person convicted, man,*

woman, and child, were consigned to the hands of the executioner. One of these victims was a boy so young and childish, that he called on his mother for help at the time of his execution, thinking she had the power to save him.”

Lord Sidmouth, the new home secretary, gave his hearty approval to this “wholesome” severity. “Wherever the law was clear,” says his reverend biographer, “he employed the law to vindicate its own majesty: in other instances, where this was impracticable, he hesitated not to apply to the legislature for the necessary powers to put down evils against which the existing laws provided no adequate remedy.” In other words, he availed himself of the laws so far as they suited his coercive purposes, and if they did not, he applied for new laws to meet the occasion. In Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire destructive riots had taken place, and on the 23rd July he had applied for and obtained a bill for “the preservation of the public peace in the disturbed districts, and to give additional powers to the justices for the purpose.” He corresponded with local magistrates, urging them to proceed vigorously, and promising his support if their zeal should be blamed. He wrote to the lord lieutenant of Yorkshire of the urgent expediency of bringing the prisoners in York Castle for riot immediately to trial, that their conviction and punishment, might strike terror into the hearts of the disaffected. A special commission for their trial was opened at York, on the 2nd of January, 1813, and a sufficient number of convictions was obtained to vindicate the supremacy of the law; “and,” says his biographer, “it now became the duty of the government to inflict that extensive retribution which the heinousness of the offences, the necessity for a striking example, and the *mistaken lenity* manifested at a previous assize, had rendered *indispensable*; and from this duty, painful as it was, Lord Sidmouth *did not shrink*. The three murderers (of Mr. Horsfall) expiated their crime at York, on the 9th of January; and on the 16th of the

same month, *fourteen* unhappy Luddites, whose cases were considered the most atrocious and unpardonable, were also led to execution—half at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and the remaining seven after an interval of two hours." Lord Sidmouth was *highly satisfied* with the conduct of all the authorities whose services were required on the occasion. "These severe, but necessary examples," continues Dr. Pellew, "produced a most salutary result in the discontented districts," and he rejoices that the *Annual Register* has said, that "few years had passed in which more internal tranquillity had been enjoyed by the people of these islands than the year 1813;" forgetting, however, to state, from the same volume, that "the bounteous harvest which crowned the hopes of the year, had produced the desirable effect of reducing the prices of the most necessary articles of human subsistence to half, or two-thirds of that which they bore during all its early months," and that the low price of food, and the repeal of the Orders in Council, had been accompanied by increased employment and a rise in the price of labour,—circumstances quite as likely to produce tranquillizing effects as the "extensive retribution" which had been so earnestly recommended by Lords Sidmouth, Ellenborough, Eldon, and Castlereagh. The placid secretary called his severity benevolence. He harshly punished some, that many might be saved from crime. His mistake was in classing murder, luddism, and radicalism, in the same category, and punishing them all alike. Stocking-frame breaking, like corn-law making, was a crime no doubt, but to hang men for it was carrying "retribution" too far, even in the then state of opinion in England. His biographer tells us, that he used frequently to repeat, with approbation, the substance of some observations which the Emperor of Russia made to him. "In England," said his majesty, "where every man enjoys so much freedom of action, the execution of the laws must necessarily be severe, in

consequence of the difficulty of imposing adequate restraints on the early transgression of them. As you cannot, therefore, interpose obstacles to the commission of crime, the only remaining check is to punish it severely when committed. In Russia we can interfere to prevent the commission."

The home secretary having, by the help of a good harvest, put down, for a time, the discontent in Lancashire, had leisure to think of benefiting the district in some other way. The reverend Cecil Daniel Wray, then one of the chaplains, now one of the fellows or canons of the Collegiate Church, had pointed out to him the "disproportion between the population of Manchester and Salford, and the means of accommodation in those towns at places of worship under the established church." In his lordship's reply, dated 20th of November, 1814, he says:—"The circumstance struck me forcibly when the returns I had moved for were laid before the House of Lords, in 1811; and I urged it, together with many other instances of such a disproportion, as a ground for the interposition of parliament, to correct an evil so favourable to the growth of schism, and, indeed, so injurious to the interests and influence of religion;" and he promises Mr. Wray, that he will call the attention of parliament to the subject, which he did in 1818, successfully, as the erection of St. Matthew's, in Camp Field, St. Andrews, in Ancoats, St. George's, in Hulme, and St. Philips, in Salford, prove. In after times, when further extension of ministrations by the rich established church was asked for in Manchester, this same Mr. C. D. Wray, and his fellow canons, resisted any appropriation, for such purpose, of any portion of the funds accruing to the parish church, amounting to some ten thousand pounds a year, and enjoyed by the ministers of that single edifice, who, at the same time, in justification of non-residence, denied that they had the cure of souls.

While submission was enforced and church extension promised at home, events were occurring abroad, giving promise to the termination of a war which ought never to have been commenced, and which brought more miseries in its train than any ever waged. Victories were now hailed, not with savage exultation at the destruction of human life, but with the hope that every succeeding triumph would bring the nation nearer to the enjoyment, once more, of the blessings of peace. In September, 1812, the French army was deprived of its winter quarters by the destruction of Moscow by fire. On the 19th of October it commenced its disastrous retreat; on the 5th of December, Napoleon himself left it to its fate; and the campaign was ended in which half a million of lives were sacrificed. In June and July, 1813, the French sustained signal defeats in Spain, and were compelled to retreat beyond the Pyrennees. In October the newly-formed army of Napoleon was defeated at Leipsic. On November 2nd he reached Mentz, with 70,000 men, the remains of 300,000 which he had a few months before led to the Elbe and the Oder. On the 31st of March, 1814, the allies entered Paris; and on the 11th of April, the emperor, dethroned, embarked at Frejus for Elba. On the 24th of December peace was concluded between Great Britain and the United States. Once more we were at peace; merchants and manufacturers rejoiced in the expectation of a revival of trade; and the starving rejoiced in the expectation of cheapness and plenty. The Congress of Vienna had permanently "settled" the affairs of Europe, Castlereagh representing England. Napoleon was in his ocean prison, guarded by the French and British fleets; and half a century's prosperity was in prospect. Alas, for the vanity of human expectations!

On February 17th, 1815, Mr. Frederick Robinson brought forward his resolutions on the corn trade, to prohibit the importation of wheat when the price was under 80s. a quarter. Tumults took place in the metropolis, which

lasted more than a week, and were only quelled by military force. There were no accounts of battles abroad to divert the people from attention to their own affairs; and affairs looked gloomy enough for a ministry which attempted to lay a heavy tax upon the people's food the moment when the country expected that abundance would follow the re-establishment of peace. Oh for a war to enable the rulers to put the chain on and snap the lock! Opportunely—as opportunely as if it been carefully schemed—Napoleon escaped from Elba, eluded the vigilance of British and French fleets and cruisers, and landed in France on March 1st, only one fortnight after the proposal of Mr. Robinson's resolutions. There was something now to look to abroad. Between the time of Napoleon's landing and the battle of Waterloo, which again “settled” the affairs of Europe, the Corn Bill was passed, not, however, without bloodshed—passed while what was called the People's House was surrounded by bristling bayonets—passed to inflict a third of a century's privation on a people exhausted by a twenty-two years' war, and loaded with an enormous debt incurred in the work of destroying human life.

Leaving out of view the loss of more than a million and a half of lives, the derangement of trade, the bankruptcy and ruin of merchants and manufacturers, and the misery which had been endured by the industrial classes during three-fourths of the war period, let us look at the money cost of this contest. The following exhibits the sums raised by loans and taxes from the commencement of the war to the peace of Amiens:—

| Years. | By Taxes. | By Loans. |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1793 | £17,170,400 | £4,500,000 |
| 1794 | 17,308,811 | 11,000,000 |
| 1795 | 17,858,454 | 18,000,000 |
| 1796 | 18,737,760 | 25,500,000 |
| 1797 | 20,654,650 | 32,500,000 |
| Carried forward ... £91,730,075 | | £91,500,000 |

| Years. | By Taxes. | By Loans. |
|---------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Brought forward ... | £91,730,075 | £91,500,000 |
| 1798 | 30,202,915 | 17,000,000 |
| 1799 | 35,229,968 | 18,500,000 |
| 1800 | 33,896,464 | 20,500,000 |
| 1801 | 35,415,096 | 28,000,000 |
| 1802 | 37,240,213 | 25,000,000 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | £263,714,731 | £200,500,000 |

The following exhibits the sums raised by taxes and loans, from the re-commencement of the war to its termination :—

| Years. | By Taxes. | By Loans. |
|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| 1803 | £37,679,063 | £15,202,931 |
| 1804 | 45,359,442 | 20,104,221 |
| 1805 | 49,659,281 | 27,931,482 |
| 1806 | 53,304,254 | 20,486,155 |
| 1807 | 58,390,225 | 23,889,257 |
| 1808 | 61,538,207 | 20,476,765 |
| 1809 | 63,405,294 | 23,404,691 |
| 1810 | 66,681,366 | 22,428,788 |
| 1811 | 64,763,870 | 27,416,829 |
| 1812 | 63,169,854 | 40,251,689 |
| 1813 | 66,925,835 | 54,026,822 |
| 1814 | 69,684,192 | 47,159,697 |
| 1815 | 70,403,442 | 46,089,603 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | £770,964,325 | £388,868,930 |

The total expenditure for the 23 years was £1,623,943,387. Deducting from this amount an average annual peace expenditure of £20,000,000, the cost of the war was £1,163,943,387 ! Let it be borne in mind that Manchester, which urged on, with an almost savage earnestness, that long-protracted and disastrous conflict, was the severest sufferer by its continuance !

Peace, gentle peace and joyous plenty, after long war and long privation ! The weary, over-burthened nation was at length to be at rest. But with peace came the corn law, to intercept the free gifts of God to his suffering creatures. We were told we must wait until the consequences of

“revulsion” had ceased ere we could enjoy comfort and abundance ; we were told that we must endure the results of a “transition” from war to peace ere we could have prosperity. The fell disease was removed, but we were to take the first steps to health in pain and penury. Were the innocent to be punished with the guilty ? Alas ! ALL WERE GUILTY. The sin had been a NATIONAL SIN. The nation had raised its voice and had loudly called for war, demanded war, punished all who were averse to war ; and national sin was followed by national punishment ; and the instruments of punishment were those rulers who had, nothing loath, been hounded on to war. We had reaped our reward in GLORY ; we had earned everlasting FAME in hundreds of battle-fields ;—were we to have all that and national prosperity besides ?

The war had been undertaken to put down opinion considered to be dangerous to the existence of venerable institutions. When peace was restored, opinion averse to established abuses again began to manifest itself. “The national joyousness of war,” says a historian of the period, “may exceed that of peace, but its joys are more fallacious, if not criminal. It is a period of exertion, of high excitement, in which a consciousness of internal maladies is forgotten in the death-struggle for foreign mastery. Moreover, it is a season of spending, waste, and reckless prodigality. It is a delirious state—intoxicated by victories, if successful—bursting into rage or sinking into despondency, if defeated. Peace, on the contrary, is less obnoxious to extremes. It is a time of quiet, of reckoning up, saving, and forethought. The smallest evils that exist are felt ; all that are impending are imagined and manifold. War affords a ready excuse for every disorder, every public privation, every remedial postponement ; but peace is the ordeal of rulers. Public burdens are nicely weighed, and the pretext for their continuance scrutinized. Not only is the physical condition of the people considered, but their laws, religion, political

rights, and even morals, become the common topics of investigation. There is leisure for everything, as well as disengaged talent, energy, and enterprise. The troubles and entanglements of peace are mostly the bitter fruits of war; but the glories of war can only be won by dissipating the blessings peace has accumulated.

The time of reckoning up, economy, and forethought had come. Passing by the short and fleeting period of a fair reward for labour which the manufacturing population—amongst them the numerous body of Lancashire weavers—enjoyed, when the disasters experienced by the French armies opened the continental markets to our merchants, and when the plentiful harvest of 1813 had made food abundant and cheap, we come to the period of severe suffering which the self-styled political economists of the ruling party characterised as “a revulsion occasioned by the change from war to peace. The industrial classes had made no calculation of this painful period of transition; they had thought that when the evil ceased the good would come; they had thought that with peace there would be plenty; and they had anticipated that they should no longer be called from their workshops to raise their voice against misgovernment and oppression. “But,” said Mr. John Edward Taylor, writing while his sympathies were yet warm with the suffering multitude, “the giving of a fictitious value to the price of corn, to enable the landed interest to pay the impositions to which it was subjected, was a measure which had produced a deep and lasting irritation in the minds of the labouring classes.” The disappointment of their hopes led to deep discontent, entertained for some time in sullen silence, but which, before twelve months had elapsed from the enactment of the corn bill, found articulate, and, to guilty rulers, terrific utterance. Previous to that time, however, a small portion of the working classes, seeing the folly of fixing a maximum price for potatoes and a minimum rate for wages, and

reading attentively the writings of Major Cartwright and William Cobbett, had come to the conclusion that there was no hope for better government unless the people were better represented in the House of Commons. Had their employers done all they could do to prevent the distress and the consequent discontent?

CHAPTER V.

MANCHESTER IN THE FIRST YEAR OF PEACE.

My residence in Manchester was the result not of accident, but of deliberate choice, while yet in a position where choice is not often allowed. I had been only two years in a warehouse in Glasgow, when, near the close of the year 1811, my master (a brother of James Grahame, the author of "The Sabbath," and uncle of James Grahame, author of a "History of the United States,") resolved that I should become the traveller in England to receive orders for the muslins he manufactured. My journey extended from Carlisle, through the western counties to Plymouth, and then, through the southern and midland counties, to Newcastle-upon-Tyne. After three years of such employment, another traveller was employed in my stead, and my time was devoted to the wholesale houses of London and Manchester. In Manchester I found that I met in the street, in one day, more country drapers than I could, with the utmost industry, meet in their own shops in two, and it struck me that if we kept our manufactured stock in Manchester, we could considerably increase our business, and at a great saving in travelling expenses. One evening in September, 1815, while sitting with my master at his house, I mentioned the concourse of drapers to Manchester, and expressed my conviction that, if there were to be a continuance of peace, that town would become so much the market for all kinds of goods, in cotton, woollens, linen, and silk, as to attract every respectable country draper in England several times in the year. The subject was long and earnestly discussed between us. At length he asked, "Is this a sudden conviction, or have you thought long about it?" I told him that every

recent visit to Manchester had confirmed the opinion I had formed soon after I had been there the first time. I spoke of the coal-fields of Lancashire, and the industry, the enterprise, and the hard-headed shrewdness of its inhabitants. He said, "We have coal, and industry, and shrewdness, and intelligence here." "Yes," I replied, "you have, but you have not centrality; you are in a corner; you have nothing but Glasgow and Paisley here; Manchester has about a dozen of Paisleys—Wigan, Preston, Blackburn, Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Ashton, Stockport, and numerous fast-growing villages, all increasing in importance, and likely, some time or other, if fair play is given to their industry, to form one enormous community." "But they have the corn-law to retard their prosperity." "So have you." After a long pause, he asked, "When can you go to take a warehouse?" "I would go to-night if there was a coach," I replied, "but I can go by to-morrow's mail." I did go next day, made a bargain for the warehouse No. 1, Peel-street, and in three weeks I opened it with the whole stock transferred from the Glasgow warehouse, with all the responsibility on my young shoulders of, in those days, a large business. It may be supposed I had not much leisure for politics; but I made a point of pushing on work in the early part of the day, so that I had the evenings to myself; and I began to look around me to ascertain what was the state of the society in which I was placed, and the opinions which prevailed amongst my fellow-townsmen.

My forefathers, for three generations, had taken the field in defence of the religious freedom of their country, and I had a strong hereditary dislike to church intolerance and exaction; my father had narrowly escaped the prosecution directed against the Scotch patriots in 1794, and I saw, with indignation, the arbitrary stretches of power continued to be exercised by the government; and I had seen the rottenness of both the English and the Scotch

boroughs, and yearned for parliamentary reform. But the event which had excited my deepest detestation was the passing of the corn bill. I regarded it, in the first place, as an impious attempt to intercept, for the profit of a few, the gifts which God had bestowed for the benefit of all; in the second place, as an impolitic and impoverishing interference with the liberty of exchanging the surplus produce of our own country for the surplus produce of other lands; and, in the third place, as a gross injustice to the working classes, the great mass of the nation, tending at once to lower their wages and raise the price of food. Such were the opinions I expressed in the spring of that year 1815, to my excellent friend, John Childs, of Bungay, when, at an early hour of the morning, we were returning through the Strand, after listening to a long protracted debate in the House of Commons during the progress of the corn bill, his memorable reply being, "If we live, we shall see more misery produced by this bill than ever followed human legislation." We have both lived to see the predicted misery. It is something to have lived to be instrumental, even in the slightest degree, in removing the impoverishing infliction. It is something to have been of those who, after an eight years' arduous struggle, destroyed the iniquitous monopoly. It is something for myself to reflect that from 1815, when it was passed, until 1846, when it was prospectively repealed, I never ceased to expose its injustice and mischievous effects. I did not find many persons of my own class in Manchester, whose opinions on free trade in corn were in accordance with my own. The working men, indeed, were right on the question, as they continued to be throughout after struggles; but they were powerless, and could not meet to deliberate without danger to their personal liberty. The manufacturers had opposed the corn bill, because they believed that rising the price of food would *raise the wages of labour*, and thus

prevent their competition with the manufacturers of other countries. I found that the opposition to the bill had been very faint. A quiet meeting had been held, pursuant to the following requisition :—

Manchester, Feb. 23, 1815.

To the Boroughreeve and Constables of Manchester and Salford.

We beg you would be pleased to appoint an early public meeting of the inhabitants of the towns of Manchester and Salford, to take into consideration the measures now pending in the House of Commons, relative to the price of corn, and the propriety of petitioning parliament against the same passing into a law.

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|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Robert Peel, | Thomas Peel, |
| Phillips and Lee, | William Sandford, |
| John Burton, | George Fraser, |
| James Gordon, | Thomas Hardman, |
| Walker and Bower, | James Hibbert, |
| John Bradshaw, | Peter Ewart, |
| John Potter, | John and Thomas Cooke, |
| Jer. Fielding, | Otho Hulme, |
| Wm. Grant and Brothers, | William Tate, |
| Hargreaves and Dugdale, | Edward Turner, |
| Thos. Andrew and Sons, | William Boyd, |
| Andrew Tomlin, | Parker and Co. |
| James Heald, | John Whitehead, |
| Oakden and Taylor, | Watkins and Harbottle, |
| J. R. Lamb, | Chadwick, Clogg, and Co., |
| J. Brooke, | Thomas Hollins, |
| James Nicholls, | Worthington, Parker, and Co., |
| Jos. Blair, | Ben. Sandford, |
| John Gray, | Brooks and Oughton, |
| Jos. Litt, | &c. &c. |

In compliance with the above requisition, we appoint a public meeting of the inhabitants of Manchester and Salford, to be held on Monday evening, the 27th instant, in the Dining Room of the Exchange Buildings, at eleven o'clock precisely.

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| H. H. BIRLEY, Boroughreeve, | } Constables, | } of Manchester. |
| THOMAS WILLIAMS, | | |
| JOSEPH GREEN, | | |
| R. HINDLEY, Boroughreeve, | } Constables, | } of Salford. |
| RD. BINDLOSS, | | |
| JOHN SHEERATT, | | |

This Mr. Hugh Hornby Birley, Boroughreeve, who convened an anti-corn-law meeting, presided over it, and signed its resolutions, subsequently attained the bad pre-eminence of commanding a troop of local yeomanry, which rode furiously, and with newly-sharpened sabres in hand, into the middle of a legally-called and peaceably-assembled meeting to petition for the repeal of the corn-law, striking indiscriminately unarmed men and defenceless women and children. Why, at an interval of little more than four years, did the petitioners of the one period hew down the petitioners of the other? The Birleys and the Greens, the Bradshaws and the Hardmans, of 1815, believed that the enactment of the corn-law would raise wages; and the working men of 1819 asked for its repeal because it had reduced wages. The meeting passed the following resolutions:—

“1st. That the great importance of trade and manufacture in this country has been fully evinced during the period of the late war, by enabling us to call forth resources impracticable in any state that was merely agricultural.

“2nd. That a large exportation of our manufactures is absolutely necessary to their support, and their sale in foreign markets can be insured only by their superiority and cheapness.

“3d. That the great extension of manufactures in France, Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands, where they possess decisive advantages *from the low price of labour*, is severely felt in this country, and is truly alarming.

“4th. That the proposed restrictions on the importation of corn must materially raise its price, and consequently that of every other species of provisions; and as a great proportion of labour in the manufacture is and *must* be manual, it will be utterly impossible to carry on competition with the Continent for any length of time, if the projected measure be adopted.

“5th. That whilst the landed interest was enriched by the war, the class of manufacturers sustained, in a variety of ways, its heaviest pressure.

“6th. That no policy can be more short-sighted or unjust, than that which would redress the temporary grievances of a part of the community, by permanently sacrificing the best interests of the whole.”

It will be seen that the stress of these resolutions is upon cheapness of labour as necessary to successful competition with other countries. The newspapers of the time contain no reports of speeches—no comments on speeches. The notice in *Cowdroy's Gazette* was confined to the following meagre paragraph:—

“On Monday last, pursuant to a requisition from some of the most respectable mercantile characters of this town, a public meeting was held at the Exchange Rooms, to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning against the new corn laws, in their process of passing both houses of parliament. Several appropriate and spirited resolutions met with unanimous assent, and we hope that the sentiments thus openly declared from so important a trading town as Manchester, will testify its sense of the impending bill; which, while it may gratify the wishes of interested landholders, must, by its tendency to *advance the price of labour*, give to the commercial rivalry of other countries a decided pre-eminence.”

It appears, however, that there were some who joined in the requisition and attended the meeting who were not satisfied with the resolution laying such stress on the danger of raising the price of labour. I find in Cowdroy an advertisement—and it is a curious sign of the times that they should be inserted only as an advertisement,—certain “Plain Observations on the Corn Laws,” in the form of resolutions, no doubt intended—very likely by John Shuttleworth, then a rising young man, but not of such standing as to insist very pertinaciously on the unmodified adoption of his views—to be proposed at the meeting, but withdrawn for the sake of committing the old ruling party to an opposition to the proposed act of commercial restriction. From these obviously intended resolutions I select the following:—

“It is evident and notorious that the rent of land has been generally doubled, and in many instances quadrupled, and that ever since the advance both on its value and its product was the result of circumstances, so, or equally, ought both to fall (as is the case in various manufactures) when such circumstances cease to operate.

“That the high price of subsistence exceeding what the lower

orders have generally been able to pay out of their earnings, has greatly contributed to the excessive poor rates.

"That it is a delusion to hold out to the lower classes, that wages or the price of labour will, or can, rise in the same extent with the proposed rise in the price of food.

"That a great number of persons thrown out of work in all trades, will inevitably reduce the rate of wages.

"That the laborious orders of this empire believing it the effect of a necessary war, have long submitted with exemplary patience to the increased price of provisions, and they must feel with proportionate disappointment, if such now be artificially continued.

"That agriculture has especially its own protecting duties; that the duties on foreign wines, spirits, and colonial sugars, although generally viewed as a source of revenue, are not less effectually protecting duties in favour of the growth of British barley and hops. That these alone outweigh at once all the protecting duties in favour of manufactures.

"That corn-laws can be only effectual when accompanied by legislative restriction extended to rent; and as this cannot, perhaps, be practically enforced, the free importation of foreign corn can alone keep down prices.

"That if the threat of laying down more land in grass should be realized, it is not more than seems to be required by the high price of butcher's meat, butter and cheese, as well as bread.

"That the property tax is now about to be repealed, and the cost of the produce of land diminished accordingly.

"That the only equitable increase of rent must be drawn from the increase of the quantity of produce, and not from the increase of the price of it.

"That an artificial increase of rent by parliamentary protections is a depreciation of all other property to the benefit of the landowner.

"That with respect to the labouring classes, it has been above shown that it is a deception to suppose their wages will, or can rise in the same proportion with the proposed rise in the price of food—an expectation disproved by the experience of the late times of high prices, when their increase of wages, however, in some places great, did not avert their increased difficulties.

"That it is absolutely necessary immediate petitions should be presented to both houses of parliament, *and the Prince Regent*, to prevent the extension of the import price of corn being altered from 63s. to 80s. per quarter."

I suppose that, to the open and strong expression of my opinion in preference of the intended resolutions to those which had been passed at the meeting, I was indebted for a call from Mr. Edward Baxter and Mr. John Edward Taylor, afterwards of the *Manchester Guardian*. Baxter was a man of much energy, whose prosperity in business had not abated his earnestness for reform, and Taylor had a youthful ardour for liberty which promised fair to continue under any circumstances. Through them I became acquainted with a little circle of men, faithful, amongst the faithless, to liberal principles, who subsequently threw the shield of their protection over the intended victims of a government oppression, which was, if possible, more vindictive than that of 1794. There were few remaining of those who had been reformers at the commencement of the French revolution. Thomas Walker was dead, and Thomas Cooper had emigrated to America. Ottiwell Wood (father of the present chairman of the board of inland revenue) had removed to Liverpool—out of the river into the cold shower—and Mr. George Philips (afterwards Sir George, Baronet), frightened at the atrocities of the revolution, had retreated into the ranks of the whigs. Robert Philips remained staunch and true to his early principles; his son Mark, afterwards M.P. for Manchester, was then but a lad. Mr. Samuel Greg also remained true to his early principles; his son, Robert Hyde, afterwards M.P. for Manchester, had not yet taken part in public business. And there were Samuel Jackson, who lived in a house, then in the country, in Princess-street, Hulme; and Thomas Preston, who lived in a retired villa on the Ashton-road, now a public-house, both venerable and intelligent men; and Thomas Kershaw, William Hazlitt's friend, whose talk was of paintings, and Stringer, of Knutsford, and Church-and-King mobs. Of the new men, the carriers-down of reform principles to another generation, were J. Edward Taylor, whom I have already named;

Joseph Brotherton, who, then in his country cottage in Oldfield-lane, gave quiet expression to the principles of free trade and peace, which he afterwards boldly asserted in the House of Commons; William Harvey, Brotherton's worthy brother-in-law; Richard Potter, afterwards M.P. for Wigan, benevolent and earnest, then beginning to take a part in public business; Thomas Potter, afterwards Sir Thomas, and first mayor of Manchester, benevolent, strong of purpose, and energetic, always willing to aid the cause of reform, but taking little or no part in public questions; John Shuttleworth, afterwards alderman, eloquent, intellectual, and bold; and Fenton Robinson Atkinson, an able lawyer and a thorough hater of oppression, whose legal knowledge and earnest love of liberty were soon to be effectively used on behalf of the illegally oppressed. Mr. John Benjamin Smith, now member for the Stirling district of boroughs, making no public appearances, was preparing himself for future labours. Mr. Absalom Watkin, giving himself more to literature than to politics, was, nevertheless, on the way to useful action. Amongst the shopkeepers of reform principles were Mr. John Dracup, Mr. P. T. Candelet, and others, who had the confidence of the working classes, using their influence beneficially. A few more there were, free traders and reformers; but the band, at least among the class of persons who wore broad cloth and white neckcloths, was small—"a small but determined band," as Richard Potter, referring to the period, used to say, when, in less trying days, the old pioneers in the cause of reform were mentioned with honour. The small band, however, furnished rather a remarkable quota to the legislature, to the press, and to the municipal government of the future borough.

Dr. William C. Taylor, in his "Life and Times of Sir Robert Peel," noticing the first baronet's opposition to the corn law, says:—"It is only justice to observe, that the resistance offered to the imposition of these laws by

the first Sir Robert Peel, was based upon more legitimate grounds than the demand for their repeal when first raised by the modern manufacturers of Manchester. They took the untenable and unpopular ground that it was necessary to have cheap bread in order to reduce the English rate of wages to the continental level; and so long as they persisted in this blunder, the cause of free trade made but little progress. On the other hand, Sir Robert Peel, with characteristic good sense, had pointed out that these laws were injurious, not to class interests, but to imperial interests. * * * It is absurd to say that Manchester was either the birth-place or the cradle of free trade; it can only claim the merit of reviving the demand for the repeal of an impolitic law, which had been allowed to slumber during a period of great political excitement and some commercial prosperity; and when the revival of the demand took place, it would have been well if the sound principles enunciated by Sir Robert Peel in 1815, had been universally adopted by those who engaged in the new movement."

I came to Manchester soon after the passing of the corn law, and had some part in the origination of the League, and I can safely aver that in 1815, exclusive of the working classes, there were not more persons right as to the manner in which wages could be affected by that enactment than there were wrong when the successful agitation of its repeal commenced in 1838. There were few in 1815, amongst the rank of merchant or manufacturer, beyond the gentlemen I have named, who held that the high price of food would reduce wages. There were as small a number of those who took any prominent part in the league movement, commencing in 1838, who held that the high price of food would raise wages. The speech of Mr. John Shuttleworth, at the 1815 meeting, which, for soundness of argument, might have been delivered at the Free Trade Hall in 1845, was not in accordance with

the opinions of a dozen men of any note in the meeting, and was only tolerated because he was opposed to the bill, as were, though for different and indeed opposite reasons, the great majority of persons present. The energetic eight years' struggle for a total repeal of the corn law, was for the benefit of the whole community—the nerveless and ineffective opposition to the passing of the bill was from a selfish fear on the part of the manufacturers, that their own interests might suffer by an advance of wages. The schoolmaster had been at work during the interval. Twenty-three years' suffering had greatly sharpened the naturally shrewd intellect of Lancashire; greater mental cultivation had brought higher moral motives into activity; the little band of the year 1815 had been receiving constant accessions to its numbers, constant accessions to its cause. In 1838 the free traders needed only leaders. The time was come—and the men came.

The radical movement was renewed, not commenced, in 1816; it had its origin in 1812, but had for a time been repressed, by the same unjust means which had been employed to put down the movement for reform and peace, in which Thomas Walker and his coadjutors had been engaged. I have described the consequences, in that year, of calling a meeting and, at the time when it should have been held, shutting, under a false pretence, the door of the place to which it had been convened. The gentlemen who had intended to move the counter-resolutions, did not think it prudent to convene another meeting in the then excited state of the public mind. Some working men, however, probably on the suggestion of the shrewd old John Knight, a manufacturer in a small way, thought it advisable that an opportunity should be afforded to the friends of peace and parliamentary reform to express their sentiments on those subjects, which they conceived to be the two measures most calculated to relieve their present sufferings and prevent the future recurrence of them. It was therefore resolved,

at a meeting held on the 26th of May, at the sign of the Elephant, in Tib-street, that an address should be presented to the Prince Regent, and a petition to the House of Commons, both of which a committee was appointed to prepare. The resolutions of this meeting appeared in the *Statesman* newspaper, of the 3rd June, 1812; and another meeting was appointed to be held on Thursday, the 11th of June, at the same public-house, to determine finally on the prosecution of the address and the petition. When the persons met they were informed that Nadin, the deputy-constable, would attend, with a military force, to break up the assemblage. John Knight said he thought that was improbable, as they were met for a constitutional purpose, and therefore had nothing to fear. They did, however, adjourn to the Prince Regent's Arms, Anecoats. "On our arrival," says Knight, in a preface to the report of the subsequent trial, "we were shown into a room capable of accommodating forty or fifty people, and after waiting a considerable time, while the company assembled and got some refreshment, we proceeded to business, about a quarter before ten o'clock. I began by inquiring the residences and occupations of the individuals who composed the meeting, and then proceeded to read the resolutions of the 26th of May, and afterwards the address and petition which had been prepared, taking the sense of the company upon each as I proceeded. I afterwards made some observations on the deplorable circumstances of the labouring classes, and lamented and reprobated the conduct some of them had adopted, to avert the continuance of which I recommended *frequent and general petitioning*, which I endeavoured to enforce as the best method of obtaining relief. About this time some person came to inform us that it was eleven o'clock; we then began the financial part of our business, and Mr. Oldham had just laid £1 2s. on the table, which I was taking up, when Nadin entered, with a blunderbuss in his hands, followed by a great number of soldiers, with

their guns and bayonets fixed. Nadin, advancing to the table at which Washington and I sat, inquired for what purpose we were there assembled, on which Washington, handing him a copy of the resolutions, replied, that our object was peace and parliamentary reform. Nadin said, 'I do not believe you; that is only a pretence.' He then searched our persons, ordered our names, occupations, and residences to be put down, *our hands to be tied*, and ourselves to be taken to the New Bailey. I said he surely could not think of preventing us from going home. He showed no warrant, but said we should be examined immediately, as the magistrates were sitting." So firm, shrewd old John—not shrewd enough to fear that the legality and constitutionality of his meeting were any protection from the rough hands of Joseph Nadin—was marched off with his thirty-seven compatriots, a gallant guard of soldiers accompanying the manacled men to the prison-house. As these were the first imprisoned of the radicals, I give their names:—

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| William Washington, | Thomas Cannavan, |
| John Haigh, | Daniel Jevins, |
| James Knott, | James Hepworth, |
| Simon Simmons, | Robert Slack, |
| Aaron Marvel, | Aaron Whitehead, |
| John Kershaw, | James Boothby, |
| John Knight, | Isaac Birch, |
| John Godby, | Thomas Cooke, |
| Edward M'Ginnes, | Charles Oldham, |
| James Lawton, | Robert Thorneley, |
| Edmund Newton, | John Oldham, |
| John Newton, | Err Oldham, |
| James Greenwood, | Thomas Harsnett, |
| Thomas Broughton, | Joseph Tilney, |
| Thomas Wilkinson, | Stephen Harrison, |
| Charles Woolling, | Rycroft Heyworth, |
| William Coppock, | Randal Judson, |
| John Howarth, | James Buckley, |
| Charles Smith, | Edward Phillips. |

While the military guarded these poor hands-tied weavers

on their road to the New Bailey prison, Joseph Nadin carried with him their resolutions, their address to the Prince Regent, and their petition to the House of Commons. The following copy of six of the resolutions will show the nature of the several documents which the deputy-constable carried off so triumphantly :—

“1. That, with the exception of a few individuals, our nominal representatives appear to act under such a baleful influence, as to have ceased to be the efficient guardians of our properties, our liberties, and our lives.

“2. That they have frequently permitted us to be wantonly plunged into unnecessary and ruinous wars, by which we have so far provoked the surrounding nations, as to induce them to interrupt friendly intercourse with us; and thereby have vastly diminished, if not destroyed, our commerce, and also so enormously increased our expenditure, that our burthens and privations are become quite insupportable.

“3. That our nominal representatives seem to be so warped by the minister of the day, as to set popular opinion at defiance; so that until the House of Commons is so far reformed as to feel with and speak the sense of the people, the people may expect to be coerced into submission.

“4. That it is now acknowledged and declared by all intelligent and honest men, that our nominal representatives are become so subservient to the minister for the time being, that it is essentially necessary that they be elected or appointed by the people at large, to give them firmness sufficient to become the real guardians of the people, an object essential to our welfare and security.

“5. That so long, intense, and extensive have been the sufferings of the people, that unless a strong hope of speedy deliverance be immediately infused into the public mind, the most dreadful consequences may be apprehended; for though hundreds or thousands may be obliged to starve, millions cannot be expected to submit to it.

“6. That the only rational ground of hope is in a speedy, radical, and efficient reform in the Commons House of Parliament; and therefore, as the rational friends of peace and social order, we pledge ourselves to use every constitutional means in our power to obtain so desirable an object, and also engage never to cease our efforts till that object be attained.”

Of the men in whose possession these resolutions were

found, and who, with their hands tied, had the honour of a military escort to the New Bailey, twenty-four were put to three others in a lock-up room, where they were confined, almost to their suffocation, for sixteen or seventeen hours, without being permitted to see their friends or their solicitor. On the afternoon of next day (Friday) they were brought before the *Rev. W. R. Hay, J. Sylvester, Esq., and Ralph Wright, Esq.* (afterwards to be heard of as the Flixton foot-path magistrate), and charged on the oath of Nadin—Nadin alone—with holding an unlawful meeting, and combining for seditious purposes, tending to overthrow the government. Most formidable men these thirty-eight poor weavers! They were again brought before the magistrates on Saturday evening in private, and were told that the charge against them amounted to felony. The “small but determined band,” formerly alluded to, had heard of the case, and Mr. Atkinson, solicitor, had promptly volunteered his legal assistance. He found admittance to the prisoners on this, their second appearance, and demanded an immediate examination. Fleming, the spy-witness, gave his evidence, but the magistrates would not permit him to be cross-examined. A commitment was made out for the whole thirty-eight, and on the Monday they were sent off to Lancaster Castle, where they were detained prisoners until their trial on the 27th of August.

The indictment charged William Washington and Thomas Broughton with having, with force and arms, feloniously administered an unlawful oath to Samuel Fleming, and the other prisoners with being present, then and there, with force and arms, feloniously aiding, assisting, and consenting. Nadin had taken into custody all whom he found in the room, made them all parties in the same charge, no one able to speak for the other, none to be witness for them. It looked black for the prisoners. It happened, however, that Nadin, in his flurry, had passed a man on the landing of the staircase, and that man was forthcoming. Fleming

swore that the oath was administered to him by Washington and Broughton; but it was proved by several witnesses that Washington was elsewhere at the time sworn to, and the man who had escaped from the clutches of Nadin swore that no oath was administered at the meeting, and that its only business was to consider about petitioning for reform and peace. Col. Sylvester, in cross-examination, acknowledged that he had given instructions to Nadin to send Fleming to the meeting, to be asked to be "twisted in," and Nadin acknowledged that he had followed close upon Fleming to take all the men into custody. Scarlett and Brougham were retained by the "small but determined band;" but in those days no speech was permitted in behalf of persons accused of felony, and they could do no better than cross-examine. This was done with effect, and the judge, old Baron Wood, who afterwards tried John Edward Taylor, plainly intimated to the jury that Fleming's evidence was flatly contradicted by incontrovertible evidence. The prisoners were acquitted. Fleming the spy, was evidently a tool of the magistrates and their coadjutor, Nadin, for he was seen for years about the town, well dressed and seemingly not engaged in any occupation.

The acquittal of John Knight and his thirty-seven compatriots, like the acquittal of Thomas Walker and John Horne Tooke, certainly tended to keep alive some feeling of confidence in trial by jury as a safeguard of personal liberty; but an expensive trial (although the money was found by middle-class men, towards whom the class of persons from which the prisoners were taken did not manifest much gratitude,) and a long imprisonment previous to trial no doubt operated in the way of intimidation. Thirty-eight men had been taken from their families, kept in prison for nearly three months, and then discharged without a farthing's compensation for their losses and sufferings; glad, however, that they had escaped transportation for life. There were in prospect, for all out-spoken

reformers, the certainty of incarceration in a miserable dungeon before trial, and the probability of transportation after. Need we be surprised that they felt they were before their time? Need we wonder that some thirty-seven out of the thirty-eight were never more heard of as agitators in the cause of parliamentary reform; and that the mass of the working classes, instead of giving loud utterance to their embittered feelings, moodily and gloomily waited for more fitting opportunity? Indomitable old John Knight persevered, but quietly; not thrusting himself into danger, but ready to come out, with all his dogged perseverance, when others were ready to come out with him. Four years had old John to wait, and then the high price of provisions and the general distress set men a thinking, as he thought, that the evils under which they suffered were irremediable without a full representation of the people in parliament.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECOND YEAR OF PEACE.

MR. WHEELER, in his History of Manchester," giving an account of the events of 1816, says: "The period was now approaching, at which Manchester began to be regarded as the centre of wide-spread and deeply-ramified social disorganization." It might have been expected that Manchester and its manufacturing dependencies would first have felt the impoverishing effects of the corn laws of 1815, which excluded foreign wheat until its price reached 80s., and of the greatly deficient harvest of 1816; but the discontent produced by the high price of provisions and the consequent scarcity of employment was strongly manifested in the agricultural before it openly displayed itself in the manufacturing districts. It was not at Manchester, Oldham, and Bolton, that riots commenced, but at Downham, Ely, and Littleport; not at Stockport, Ashton, and Bury, but at Bridport, Biddeford, and Cambridge. Curious commentary this on a law, which, whatever might be its operation on manufactures, was to give protection and prosperity to agriculture, and which, sustaining the price of food, was to sustain the wages of agricultural labourers! Strange it is that farm labourers, for whose special welfare the corn law was passed, and so well defended, should, in a single year after its enactment, wage war against their generous protectors, ranging themselves around banners, not inscribed "protection to agriculture," but "bread and blood!" The following account of the Ely riots has been chiefly extracted from "a plain statement of facts," forwarded to Lord Sidmouth, by the Rev. John Nachell, vicar of Littleport.

The first disposition to riot manifested itself in the small village of Southery, six miles from Littleport, where a mob assembled on the 18th of May, complaining of want of work, *lowness of wages*, and *dearness of flour*. These parties proceeded in a riotous manner to Downham, plundering the butchers' and bakers' shops, and committing various acts of outrage, until a compromise, "very improperly," says the reverend narrator, was made with them by the magistrates, to the effect that labourers should receive two shillings and six pence per day, and have their flour at two shillings and six pence per stone, the regular price at that time being three shillings and nine pence. Nothing farther occurred until the 22nd May, when there were two benefit club dinners at Littleport. In the evening the members, consisting chiefly of labourers, the class of men who, according to the protectionists are always best paid when the price of corn is highest, assembled to the number of two hundred, and with a horn and a banner paraded the village, "committing every excess of plunder and outrage," until about eleven o'clock, when they presented themselves at the parsonage, demanding money. Mr. Nachell's remonstrance as a magistrate, and promises as a minister of the gospel, were equally in vain; his house was forced open and completely plundered, while the family concealed themselves in the field. Next morning the rioters assembled, in greatly increased numbers, at Ely, where they were joined by a number of disaffected persons." They opened negotiations with the magistrates, who felt it advisable to comply with their terms for good wages and cheap food, and the greater part of the rioters returned to their homes, with a threat, however, of re-assembling at night. Meanwhile the Rev. Henry Law had proceeded express to Lord Sidmouth, and his lordship hearing that the Rev. Henry B. Dudley, a magistrate of Ely, was in town, sent for him and dispatched him home to preserve its peace. From Cambridge, forty men of

the Royston troop of volunteer cavalry proceeded to Ely, and finding, on their arrival, that the rioters were still at Littleport, committing “great atrocities” there, it was resolved to surprise them in that place. Eighteen men of the Royals, and part of the Royston yeomanry, headed by the Rev. Sir H. B. Dudley and the Rev. Henry Law, marched out to the attack, which was completely successful. The first rioter who attempted resistance being instantly shot by a dragoon, the rest made but a feeble resistance, and above seventy of them were taken prisoners to Ely. A special commission was speedily issued to Justices Abbott and Burrough, and E. Christian, Esq., Chief-justice of Ely, for the trial of the offenders, and the proceedings commenced on the 17th of June, when thirty-four of them were capitally convicted, of whom five were hanged by the neck until they were dead. Similar disturbances arose in Downham, Bury, Cambridge, and Norwich, but, “in consequence, probably,” says Mr. Sidmouth’s biographer, “of the prompt and judicious severity exercised at Ely, were speedily suppressed.” “The proceedings at Ely have unquestionably had a good effect,” writes Lord Sidmouth himself to his brother; and he resolved to continue the wholesome severity which had done so much good. There was, however, speedy proof tending to “confirm his anticipations of a winter of discontent and disturbance;” and Lord Darlington wrote to him from Raby Castle, on the 8th of October, that the “distress in Yorkshire was unprecedented—that there was a total stagnation of the little trade they even had—that wheat was already more than one guinea a bushel, and no old corn in store—that the potato crops had failed—that the harvest was then only beginning, the corn in many parts being still quite green, and that he feared a total defalcation of all grain that season from the deluge of rain which had fallen for many weeks, and was still falling.” Such were the prospects of the country in the year after the corn law was passed.

Is it to be wondered at that the disposition to riot which had manifested itself first in the agricultural and then in the coal districts should extend itself to the manufacturing? Repeal the corn law! Restore the heptarchy! The severities at Ely were regarded as having had "unquestionably a good effect;" and a continuance of the wholesome severity, with additional enactments to increase the stringency of the laws, were the only remedies of which Sidmouth, Castlereagh, Vansittart, Lord Palmerston, Mr. Canning, and their colleagues in office, took any thought. Peel, then secretary for Ireland, shared in the difficulties experienced by the administration to which he was attached. The deficient harvest had greatly aggravated the usual distress of that unhappy country. To the credit of his humanity, and as a presage of the wise policy which he followed in 1846, when matured experience and sagacity had made him more of a statesman, and when he was a dictator to the senate instead of a humble subordinate to the weak and obstinate Sidmouth, he made every exertion in his power to relieve the scarcity, by issuing a treasury order for the admission of American flour free of duty. Let this be remembered when a statue is erected to his memory in Manchester, to mitigate, in some slight degree, the deep censure justly due to his thirty years' support of the starvation-creating monopoly.

Towards the close of 1816, the people, disappointed in their expectations that prosperity and plenty would follow in the train of peace, and having no faith in a legislature which, the moment when the war was terminated, had inflicted the corn law, demanded a better representation in parliament. When the Israelites complained of their Egyptian task-masters, the reply was—"Ye are idle; ye are idle." When, instead of burning corn-stacks, and plundering provision shops, after the example of the agricultural labourers, the manufacturing population demanded reform, the reply was—"Ye are seditious; ye are seditious."

William Cobbett, then wielding the power of a fourth estate, wrote thus :—"The country, instead of being disturbed, as the truly seditious writers on the side of corruption would fain make us believe, instead of being "irritated" by the agitation of the question of reform, is kept, by the hope which reform holds out to it, in a state of tranquillity wholly unparalleled in the history of the world, under a similar pressure of suffering. Of this fact, the sad scenes at Dundee are a strong and remarkable instance. At the great and populous towns of Norwich, Manchester, Paisley, Glasgow, Wigan, Bolton, Liverpool, and many others, where the people are suffering in a degree that makes the heart sick within one to think of, they have had their meetings to petition for reform; they have agreed on petitions; hope has been left in their bosoms; they have been inspired with patience and fortitude; and all is tranquil. But at Dundee, where a partial meeting had been held early in November, and where a gentleman who moved for reform had been borne down, their violence has broken forth, houses have been plundered, and property and life exposed to all sort of perils; and this, too, amongst the sober, the sedate, the reflecting, the prudent, the moral people of Scotland." A bad example is catching. Riots occurred at Glasgow, occasioned by discontent with the offensive mode of distributing soup; at Preston, from the weavers being out of employment; at Nottingham, on account of the use of frames; at Birmingham and Walsall, from want of work; and at Merthyr and Tredegar, where, owing to a reduction of wages, 12,000 persons had assembled, and were dispersed by the military. The legislature had sown the whirlwind, and the country was enduring the storm. Indeed, anarchy was averted by the direction of the mind of the oppressed to the remedial measure; but the rulers thought that even the proposal of the remedy was worse than the disease.

"At this time," says Bamford in his 'Life of a Radical,' "the

writings of William Cobbett suddenly became of great authority; they were read on nearly every hearth in the manufacturing districts of South Lancashire, in those of Leicester, Derby, and Nottingham; also in many of the Scottish manufacturing towns. Their influence was speedily visible. He directed his readers to the true cause of their sufferings—inigovernment, and to its proper correction—parliamentary reform. Riots soon became scarce, and from that time they have never obtained their ancient vogue with the labourers of this country. Let us not descend to be unjust. Let us not withhold the homage which, with all the faults of William Cobbett, is still due to his great name. Instead of riots and destruction of property, Hampden clubs were now established in many of our large towns and the villages and districts around them; Cobbett's books were printed in a cheap form; the labourers read them, and thenceforward became deliberate and systematic in their proceedings. Nor were there wanting men of their own class to encourage and direct the new converts: the Sunday-schools of the preceding thirty years had produced many working men of sufficient talent to become readers, writers, and speakers in the village meetings for parliamentary reform; some also were found to possess a rude poetic talent, which rendered their effusions popular, and bestowed an additional charm on their assemblages; and by such various means anxious listeners at first, and then zealous proselytes, were drawn from the cottages of quiet nooks and dingles to the weekly reading and discourses of the Hampden clubs.

“One of these clubs was established, in 1816, at the small town of Middleton, near Manchester; and I have been instrumental in its formation, a tolerable reader also, and a rather expert writer, was chosen secretary. The club prospered; the number of its members increased; the funds raised by subscriptions of a penny a week became more than sufficient for all outgoings; and taking a bold step, we soon rented a chapel which had been given up by a society of Kilhamite Methodists. This place we threw open for the religious worship of all sects and parties, and there we held our meetings on the evenings of Monday and Saturday in each week. The proceedings of our society, its place of meeting—singular as being the first place of meeting occupied by reformers (for so in those days we were termed), together with the services of religion connected with us, drew a considerable share of public attention to our transactions, and obtained for the leaders some notoriety. Several meetings of delegates from the surrounding districts were held at our chapel, on which

occasions the leading reformers of Lancashire were generally seen together. These were John Knight, of Manchester, cotton manufacturer; William Ogden, of Manchester, letter-press printer—afterwards immortalised by Canning, as the ‘revered and ruptured Ogden;’ William Benbow, of Manchester, shoemaker; — Bradbury, of Manchester, stonecutter; Charles Walker, of Ashton, weaver; Joseph Watson, of Mossley, clogger; Joseph Ramsden, of Mossley, woollen-weaver; William Nicholson, of Lees, letter-press printer; John Haigh, of Oldham, silk-weaver; Joseph Taylor, of Oldham, hatter; John Kay, of Royton, student in surgery; Robert Pilkington, of Bury, cotton-weaver; Amos Ogden, of Middleton, silk-weaver; Caleb Johnston, of Middleton, cotton-weaver; and Samuel Bamford, of Middleton, silk-weaver. Soon afterwards we were joined by John Johnston, of Manchester, tailor; and Joseph Mitchell, of Liverpool, draper. Such were the conditions of all whom I recollect as standing prominently forward in those times, through evil and through good report, in our district of the country.”

In December, 1816, a meeting of delegates was held in the chapel, at which it was resolved to send out missionaries to other towns and villages. William Fitton, of Royton, a very honest and very intelligent man, and Benbow, and Pilkington went to the manufacturing towns in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and were very successful in awakening the demand for reform. On the 4th November a great meeting was held in St. Peter’s Field, Manchester, John Knight in the chair, “to take into consideration the distressed state of the country;” and similar meetings were held in the neighbouring towns. On the 1st January, 1817, a meeting of delegates from twenty-one petitioning bodies was held in the Middleton chapel, when resolutions were passed declaratory of the right of every male to vote who paid taxes; that males of eighteen should be eligible to vote; that parliaments should be elected annually; that no placeman or pensioner should sit in parliament; that every twenty thousand inhabitants should send a member to the House of Commons; and that talent and virtue were the only qualifications necessary. “Such,” says Bamford, “were the moderate views and wishes of the reformers in

those days, as compared with the present. The ballot was not insisted upon as a matter of reform. Concentrating our whole energy for the obtainment of annual parliaments and universal suffrage, we neither interfered with the House of Lords nor the bench of bishops, nor the working of factories, nor the corn laws, nor the payment of members, tithes nor church rates, nor a score of other matters which in these days have been pressed forward with the effect of distracting the attention and weakening the exertions of reformers—any one or all of which matters would be more likely to succeed with a house of commons on the suffrage we claimed than with one returned as at present.” Mr. Bamford ought to have added, that although the radicals did not petition for a repeal of the corn law, the passing of that act was constantly urged as the strongest proof of the necessity of parliamentary reform, and that at every public meeting flags were displayed, bearing the inscription of “No corn law.”

The enemies of reform were alarmed at the movement of the radicals. On the 13th of January, at the instigation of Lord Sidmouth, who recommended such demonstrations to be made everywhere, a meeting of the tory party was held in Manchester, to consider the “necessity of adopting additional measures for the maintenance of the public peace.” An association to further that object was formed, and a declaration adopted which received the signatures of upwards of two thousand of the principal residents. In this embodiment of their views and feelings, they stated that “the numerous meetings held, both publicly and secretly—the organised system of committees, delegates, and missionaries—the contributions levied, particularly for disseminating pamphlets calculated to mislead and irritate the public mind—the indecorous and highly unconstitutional reflections upon the exalted personage now exercising the royal authority—the marked disparagement of the most extensive charitable relief in the seasons of unavoidable

pressure—the language of intimidation, not merely hinted, but plainly expressed—the appointment of popular assemblies in various parts of the kingdom on the same day, after the meeting of parliament, and the previous assembling of deputies in London;—all these circumstances afford strong manifestation of meditated disorder and tumult, and bear no analogy whatever to the fair and legitimate exercise of that constitutional liberty which is emphatically the birth-right and security of Englishmen.” Meetings for the same purpose were held at Bury, Bolton, Rochdale, Oldham, Stockport, Ashton, Saddleworth, Sandbach, Congleton, and Liverpool. On the 25th of February an attempt was made, by holding a meeting at Preston, to check the progress of “disloyalty” in Lancashire, but the “loyalists” were outvoted and defeated in their objects. Other means had to be tried.

An assault on the Prince Regent, upon his return from opening the session of parliament in January, came opportunely to aid the operations of the terrorists. Soon after a message was sent to both houses, communicating to them “papers containing information respecting certain practices, meetings, and combinations in the metropolis and in the different parts of the kingdom, evidently calculated to endanger the public tranquillity, to alienate the affections of his majesty’s subjects from his majesty’s person and government, and to bring into hatred and contempt the whole system of our laws and constitution.” These papers were referred to select committees in both houses; and in both, these committees reported that there was a dangerous and wide-spread conspiracy for the subversion of public order. Sidmouth was ready with his remedies. In his estimation severity was mercy, and radicalism was as bad as frame-breaking Luddism, and little less atrocious than the murder which was expiated by the executions at York in 1812. Bills were at once introduced for suspending the Habeas Corpus Act—preventing the seditious meetings—

punishing attempts to seduce soldiers or sailors from their allegiance—and providing for the security of the royal person. They were carried with but slight opposition—parliament thus declaring that it needed no reform, and that it would not permit the subject to be discussed.

Evil advisers had crept into the ranks of the radicals, and spies and inciters to mischief had been sent amongst them; and then came the “Blanket Meeting,” in St. Peter’s Fields, Manchester, afterwards to become still more celebrated in the annals of radicalism, from which thousands of men were to march to London with their petition, each carrying a blanket or rug strapped to his shoulder, under which he was to bivouac on the road, if no better accommodation could be had. Mr. John Edward Taylor says that Mitchell had the credit of inventing this rather unusual mode of exercising the constitutional right of petition. Mr. Bamford says: “It was one of the bad schemes which accompanied us from London, and was the result of the intercourse of some of the deputies with the leaders of the London operatives—the Watsons, Prestons, and Hoopers. Mitchell and Benbow had cultivated a rather close acquaintance with these men, little suspecting, I have no doubt, that their new friends had already fallen under the influence of instigators who betrayed all their transactions to the government.” Bamford says he protested strongly against the project; but his warnings, if he did warn, were disregarded. On the 10th of March the meeting was held, and several hundred persons set out on their route to London. Some time after their departure, a considerable detachment of the King’s Dragoon Guards rode rapidly up to the hustings, which they surrounded, taking those who were upon them, twenty-nine in number, amongst whom were Baguley and Drummond, into custody. “Benbow,” says Bamford, “took care not to make his appearance.” The meeting was then dispersed by the troops. “Here, however,” says Mr. J. E. Taylor, in the pamphlet from which I have formerly quoted, “is to be

found the precedent for that novel form of reading the Riot Act (if in either case it were read at all), which was followed on the 16th of August, 1819. The act was certainly not read according to the mode prescribed by the statute, nor were the crowd allowed that time for dispersion, which the law gives them." When the field was cleared, a large body of soldiers and constables were despatched after those who had proceeded on the road towards London. They came up with them on Lancashire Hill, near Stockport. Some hundreds were taken into custody, several received sabre wounds, and one industrious cottager, resident on the spot, was shot dead by the pistol of a dragoon, at whom a stone was thrown from the situation where, with others, the poor man stood. In this case a verdict of "Wilful murder" was returned by the coroner's jury, but no steps were taken to bring the delinquent to justice. "Trifling as was the general amount of injury sustained on this occasion," says Mr. Taylor, "I have the means of stating, positively, that this circumstance was owing, rather to the humanity and coolness of the military, than of the magistrates and municipal officers. Sir John Bingham repeatedly found it necessary to check the violence and impetuosity of the civil authorities." About a hundred and eighty persisted in their march, and reached Macclesfield at nine o'clock, of whom some lay out all night, and found their way home next morning, and some were committed to prison. About fifty went on to Leek, and only some twenty were known to have gone as far as Ashbourne, some of whom found their way to Derby, stopping where the Scotch rebels stopped in 1745.

After the description of the "blanket" folly, and after quoting Bamford's assertion that the plan was brought from London by Mitchell and Benbow, subsequent to the meeting of deputies of the Crown and Anchor, on February 7th, it is but fair to state, that Mitchell says that the plan was agreed upon at Major Cartwright's long before that

time, in the presenee of Mr. Cobbett, who fully approved of it, and of Mr. Peter Walker, who did not dissent. It is not of much consequence accurately to know who where the originators of the folly. It brought much misery upon many misled men, and no little discredit on the cause of parliamentary reform thus attempted to be promoted.

The blanket meeting and the blanket march were, of all possible devices, the least likely to convince the middle and the aristocratic classes that the multitudes were fitted for the enjoyment of the electoral franchise; and yet there were circumstances which, though not amounting to a justification of those movements, offer, when duly considered, some palliation of the folly. There were many brought to the very brink of starvation—and hunger seldom reasons; there were many of those who thought that the open exhibition of their misery would excite sympathy and bring relief; and there were many who thought that the show of strength, without being illegally put forth, would ensure respect to their claim for fair representation. In smaller numbers were those who thought that it would be patriotic to achieve, even by force, if force were to be used against themselves, the rights which were denied them; and there were some who, being employed by government and the local magistracy to discover sedition and betray the seditious, made work for themselves by instigating the disaffected into such open action as would make them amenable to the laws. Bamford tells of having been waited upon by a young man, a stranger, and invited to take part in making a “Moseow of Manchester;” and how, in the belief that he was only misguided, the fellow was permitted to go away in safety after the atrocious proposal had been made!

There had been unnecessary severity in dispersing and pursuing the people who had met and, blanket-enveloped, marched. Middle-class men, then themselves becoming reformers, severely blamed the harsh dispersion and the rough pursuit. There needed to be some justification for

the past harshness, and some reason for the continuance of coercion. On the 28th of March the magistrates and people of Manchester, in constant correspondence with Sidmouth, notified "that information had reached them, on which they could place the fullest reliance of a most daring and traitorous conspiracy, the object of which was nothing less than open insurrection and rebellion." They added, that "deputies, calling themselves delegates, not only from the principal towns in this district, but others from a considerable distance, are known to be engaged in it. The town of Manchester is one of the first pointed out for attack, and the moment fixed upon for the diabolical enterprise is the night of Sunday next, the 13th instant." The awful plot is more circumstantially described in the report of the secret committee of the House of Lords: "It was on the night of the 30th of March, that a general insurrection was intended to commence at Manchester. The magistrates were to be seized, the prisoners were to be liberated, the soldiers were either to be surprised in their barracks, or a certain number of factories were to be set on fire, for the purpose of drawing the soldiers out of their barracks, of which a party, stationed near them for that purpose, were to take possession, with a view of seizing the magazine. The signal for the commencement of these proceedings was to be the firing of a rocket, or rockets; and hopes were held out that 2,000 or 3,000 men would be sufficient to accomplish the first object, and that the insurgents would be 50,000 strong in the morning."

"The official promulgation of these statesmen," says Mr. Wheeler, "combined with the scenes which were enacting through the country, excited much apprehension. The provisions of the Watch and Ward Act were put in force in Manchester; special constables in large numbers were enrolled, troops poured in from all quarters, and, in conformity with the recommendation of the grand jury of the sessions, three troops of yeomanry, each containing fifty

men, were formed. It was believed that a conspiracy had been organised for a simultaneous rising throughout Lancashire, Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Yorkshire, and Warwickshire; and no body can doubt that there prevailed amongst the people much dissatisfaction, arising in great part, probably, from commercial distress, as well as from political discontent." I had to take my part in these watchings and wardings, and I recollect that one night after I had headed a company, amongst whom was Mr. John Edward Taylor, who lived next door to me in Islington-street, Salford, I wrote in the minute book at the station-house that I had found all quiet during our domiciliary visits, and my belief that the lieges would remain quiet if they were let alone. We shall hear of the yeomanry corps, at that time formed, hereafter, when they achieved an unenviable fame. What became of the great plot so circumstantially described, and giving rise to such precautions for the preservation of the king's peace?

On the evening of the 27th of March, 1817, about a dozen persons were taken into custody at Ardwick and other parts of the town, and sent, not to the New Bailey prison for committal to take their open trial at Lancaster, but to London, to undergo secret examinations at the home secretary's office. After the first burst of astonishment and alarm, which this intelligence caused, had subsided, people began to inquire a little into the probability of their being well founded, particularly as the 30th of March had passed without the slightest discernable symptom of popular effervescence. In order, probably, to arrest the current of public incredulity, the Rev. W. R. Hay, stipendiary chairman of the bench of magistrates, in his charge to the grand jury at the Salford sessions, as reported in *Wheeler's Manchester Chronicle* of the 26th of April, stated, that when the trials of the parties accused came on, "purposes of the blackest enormity must be disclosed to the public," and that those "who *professed* to doubt their existence, would be finally

constrained to admit the existence of the whole of them." But, notwithstanding this positive official assurance, *all the persons arrested on the imputation of these atrocious designs were discharged, not only without trial, but without any indictment being ever preferred against them!*

Two SPIES had been taken into custody along with the men who were apprehended as implicated in the plot, but they were immediately discharged. One of them had assumed the name of Warren, but his real name was Waddington, and his place of residence Bolton. The other was a man named Lomax, a barber at Bank Top, Manchester. It was denied in parliament that the latter was a spy: but he was closely connected with Waddington, whose title to the epithet was never disputed, and his instant release showed what his occupation had been. It was further admitted that he had written to Lord Sidmouth on the 17th of March, offering to become a spy. Michael Hall, another spy, who assumed the name of Dewhurst, was in the house at Ardwick when the alleged conspirators were arrested, but it was arranged that he should escape. After Waddington's exposure in the House of Commons, he was passing through a street in Bolton, when a young man, a schoolmaster, exclaimed, "Oh, thou blackface!" a term there in use, since the riot at West Houghton, to designate a spy. Waddington coolly lowered his gun, fired, and sent a ball through the thigh of his unfortunate accuser! He was committed to prison for this offence, but Colonel Fletcher, or Major Watkin, immediately ordered him to be discharged *on bail*, although the offence charged was unbailable; and in the meantime it was managed that the poor schoolmaster should be indicted at the Salford sessions for a riot, Waddington being the principal witness against him. He was convicted, and on his subsequently obtaining liberty he was unable to prosecute his own charge against Waddington, who went unpunished! I have reason to know that a gentleman then in office at Bolton, much disgusted at this

perversion of justice, was induced to inquire on what foundation his tory opinions had been laid, and that the result was his conversion to reform principles. Nor was this an infrequent result of similar observation and inquiry.

Amongst the persons taken into custody, under the suspension of the habeas corpus act, in connection with this pretended plot, was the weaver poet, Samuel Bamford, who was apprehended and handcuffed at Middleton, by Nadin, the deputy-constable of Manchester, and six or eight police officers, all of whom were well armed with staves, pistols, and blunderbusses. Nadin is thus described by Bamford:—
 “He was, I should suppose, about six feet one inch in height, with an uncommon breadth and solidity of frame. He was also as well as he was strongly built, upright in gait and active in motion. His head was full sized, his complexion sallow, his hair dark and slightly grey; his features were broad and non-intellectual, his language coarse and illiterate, and his manner rude and overbearing to equals or inferiors.” The radical poet, who seems, after all, to have had no dislike to this rough deputy, gives a specimen of his conversation on their way to the New Bailey prison in Manchester:—

“Passing Street Bridge and Royley, we entered the village of Royton, the streets of which were deserted and the doors shut. We soon returned to Royley, and the constables made a dash into a house in search of a man named Meller, but he was not there. A crowd was collected near the carriage, and as I was expecting to move on, the door was suddenly opened, and a long, thin barrel of a human body was thrust into the coach, head first, a couple of stilt-like legs being doubled up after it. ‘Loek ’em together,’ said Mr. Nadin, and it was no sooner said than done. This person had met some of the runners in a back court or alley, and threatened to beat in their brains with a walling hammer which he had in his hand.

“George Howarth, for that was the name of my new companion, was a decent, labouring, married man, of Royton, and was about six feet four inches in height. He said he thought it a very hard case; ‘he cudno’ tell wot he’d dun amiss.’ Mr. Nadin said he’d know ‘wot he’d dun amiss’ before he was much older.

“‘Why, bless your life, Mesthur Nadin,’ said George, ‘yo’re a graidley felley for out ‘at I kno’ to th’ contrary, an’ I never sed nowt ogen yo’ i’ my lyve.’

“‘Aye, an’ I’ll make thee into a graidley felley too afore I ha’ dun wi’ the. Theaw’rt a moderate length to begin wi’, but theaw’ll be lunger afore theaw comes baek to Reighton: ween ha’ the hang’d,’ said our keeper.

“‘Nay, Mesthur Nadin,’ said George, ‘dunno’ say so: they axt wot I had i’ mi’ hont, an’ I shode ‘em; it wur nobbut a bit ov a wallin’ hommer ‘at I’d bin a borroin’.’

“‘Aye,’ said Mr. Nadin, ‘an’ theaw sed theaw’d knoek their brains eawt wi’ it. But ween larn thee, an’ aw yo’ jacobins, heaw yo’ threatun to kill th’ king’s officers: theaw’ll be hang’d as sure as theaw sits their.’ George seemed thoughtful upon this. He looked at the shackles, and at me; and soon after we drew up at the Spread Eagle public-house, in Manchester-street, Oldham.”

On Sunday, the 30th of March, Bamford, along with Dr. Healey, Joseph Sellers, Nathan Hulton, John Roberts, Edward Ridings, and Edward O’Connor were sent off to London, heavily ironed by the legs. Nadin wished to add body and neek collars, and armlets with chains, but the king’s messengers objected to their use. The prisoners were accompanied by the two messengers, and Joseph Mills and James Platt, Manchester police officers. On Tuesday they were conveyed to the secretary of state’s office, at Whitehall, where they were received by Sir Nathaniel Conant, the police magistrate, Sir Samuel Shepherd, the attorney general, Lord Sidmouth, and Lord Castlereagh—the secret tribunal, which, under the suspension of the habeas corpus act, superseded judge and jury. On the 29th of April, Bamford appeared for the fifth time at the home office, and was discharged, giving his personal bond in the sum of one hundred pounds, to be levied on his goods and chattels, if within twelve months he did not appear in his majesty’s court of justice at Westminster. The other prisoners were sent to various places of confinement, but were all ultimately dismissed untried, although many of them were charged with being deeply implicated in the

terrific Ardwick plot. Poor Bamford, huffed and cuffed and ironed at Manchester, was greatly mollified by the official civility of Lord Sidmouth, and records his "warmest gratitude" to Mr. Williams, the messenger, to whose care he had been consigned, and who, on the morning of Bamford's release, made him "a handsome present of clothes."

And so ended this grand plot, and so were fulfilled the predictions of the Rev. W. R. Hay, in his charge to the grand jury, that when the trials of the parties accused came on, "purposes of the blackest enormity must be disclosed to the public," and then those "who professed to doubt their existence would be finally constrained to admit the existence of the *whole system*!" It requires a great stretch of charity to think that the reverend magistrate had any belief in the existence of the plot. I do not believe he had; but the confident prediction served the purposes of the Sidmouth administration, and, for such and further services in repressing the demand for reform, the reverend lawyer, a few years afterwards, was rewarded with the vicarage of Rochdale, worth £2,400 a year.

Not contented with the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, which enabled ministers to imprison, and to hold in prison, any one suspected of radicalism, Lord Sidmouth desired to lay the press at his feet. On the 12th of May he addressed a circular to the lords lieutenant of England and Wales, apprising them that the law officers of the crown had given an opinion that the magistrates possessed the power of holding to bail persons found selling writings which were deemed, though not legally adjudicated, seditious or blasphemous libels, and requesting that they would notify the same to the respective justices within their jurisdiction. Earl Grey brought the matter before the House of Lords, by moving "that the case submitted to the law officers be laid before the house;" but his motion was rejected by a great majority. A similar motion was made in the House of Commons by Sir Samuel Romilly, and with

the same result. The expression of opinion, however, had been strong enough to deter ministers from their purpose. A short time before the publication of Lord Sidmouth's circular, William Cobbett had sailed for America, much to the indignation of some of the radicals, who thought he ought to have shared with them the risk of imprisonment. No doubt he feared that a movement against the press, by an unconstitutional stretch of power, was contemplated, and that it would be made to apply especially to him. The following was his farewell address:—

“Liverpool, 26th March, 1817.

“My departure for America will surprise nobody but those who do not reflect. A full and explicit statement of my reasons will appear in a few days, probably on the 5th of April. In the meanwhile I think it necessary for me to make known that I have fully empowered a gentleman of respectability and integrity to settle all my affairs in England. I owe my countrymen most sincere regard, which I shall always entertain toward them in a higher degree than towards any other people upon earth. I carry nothing from my country but my wife and my children, and surely *they* are my own, at any rate. I shall always love England better than any other country. I will never become a subject or citizen of any other state; but I and mine were not born under a government having the absolute power to imprison us at its pleasure; and, if we can avoid it, we will neither live nor die under such an order of things. If I have not taken leave of numerous friends in London and in the country, it was because I should have been made unhappy by their importunities and the expressions of their sorrow. I make an enormous sacrifice of property and of feeling; but, when my heart feels the tugs of friendship, and of all the interesting objects in Hampshire, it is reconciled to the loss by the thought, that I can enjoy them only during the pleasure of a secretary of state. When this order of things shall cease to exist, then shall I again see England.

“WILLIAM COBBETT.”

If there was little of heroism in this retreat, nothing could be more cowardly than the proceedings of the ministry. With all its irresponsible power, the constitutional safeguard of personal liberty being suspended, it did not dare to touch the hair of the head of any man beyond

the station of an operative cotton spinner, a weaver, or a common day labourer. These were the classes amongst whom the spies were sent; from these classes were taken the men who were sent to dungeons, to be afterwards discharged without trial. The administration of 1794 boldly proceeded against Thomas Walker, who had been boroughreeve, and held high mercantile station. The administration in the spring of 1817 was bold enough to apprehend a few dozens of poor, friendless, and nameless men, but it had not the courage to bring them to trial. Overt acts were wanting, and it set to work to make them. If men would not rise in open rebellion to give ministers an opportunity of exercising "wholesome severities" on a great scale, miscreants, assuming the name and expressing the feelings of reformers, were to be sent amongst them, to irritate their discontents, and to assure them that if they would only rise, with arms in their hands, there were tens of thousands ready to join them, and to strike a decisive blow for their liberties!

CHAPTER VII.

THE SPIES EFFECTUALLY AT WORK.

MINISTERS finding that they could not bring into open court the parties charged with being concerned in the awful plot which was to have made a "Moscow" of Manchester on the 30th of March, 1817; seeing that their prosecution of Thomas Jonathan Wooler, for a libel upon themselves, was abortive; and knowing that on the trial, for a riot in London, in December of the previous year, of Watson, Thistlewood, Preston, and Hooper, which was fixed for June 9th, they had not a particle of evidence to support the charge of high treason beyond what could be supplied by Castles, an infamous spy in their own employment, became exceedingly anxious to obtain a further suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. On Friday, the 13th of June, Lord Sidmouth brought before the House of Lords his bill for that purpose. On the previous day the report of the secret committee had been read to the house, and although two months had elapsed from the time at which the Ardwick plot was to have exploded, and no evidence had been found against the parties implicated, the particulars of that alleged revolutionary scheme were stated as fully and as particularly as if every allegation could be positively and irrefragably proved. The report stated also that in some part of the proceedings there were "*traces* of an intention to issue proclamations, absolving the king's subjects from their allegiance, and denouncing death against their opponents." With a strange candour it was added, "The committee, however, allow that they have not found *any* evidence of the preparation of these proclamations." On averments such as this the legislature was asked further to suspend

the law for ensuring the liberties of the subject. The bill was read a second time on Monday, 16th, and on Thursday, 19th, it was read a third time and passed.

No time was lost in carrying it to the lower house. On the following day the report of the secret committee of the commons was read, and, like that of the lords, the main stress was laid upon the Ardwick plot, ministers then well knowing, if they did not well know from the first, that there was not a particle of evidence that it ever existed. On Monday, the 23rd, Lord Castlereagh proposed the first reading of the bill. Strong representations had gone from men of respectable station in Manchester against belief in statements which had been framed by persons known to have been employed by government, and known also to have urged the discontented to some overt treasonable or seditious act. In allusion to these representations, and to the charge that a miscreant named Oliver, a government spy, had, in many places in Lancashire, been endeavouring to excite to treasonable practices, Castlereagh said that Mr. Oliver had not gone on his government mission till the 17th of April; that two dangerous plots had been concocted before that time; and that "it was not an improper thing to send him down *to see what was going on.*" Money, he said, was constitutionally placed at the disposal of government for such purposes, and it was not right that its agents should be maligned. Mr. Ponsonby, a member of the secret committee, said: "He opposed the bill, as not called for by the danger, which might be remedied by other means. He had asked Oliver, in the committee, various questions as to the sort of persons implicated in these proceedings, when Oliver had distinctly avowed, that he knew of no persons of rank or influence who were connected with the agitators. He moreover admitted that he knew of no society in London who were acting with them in the country. Yet Oliver went into the country as the London delegate, was received as such, and told the people that London was ready

to rise on the first movement, though it would not begin first. Such information must have had the effect of stimulating the wretched manufacturers to acts of rebellion, in the hope that a change would relieve them from their distresses. As no person of rank or influence was engaged in these movements, it was quite unnecessary to suspend the liberties of the whole nation on account of the disturbances in a few districts. Such measures would never restore tranquillity."

A member rejoicing in the name of Lee Keek saw no cure but in the suspension of the law; for so long as the free agency of the leaders was allowed, nothing would put them down; such agents as Oliver, a man "of good moral character," were absolutely necessary. Mr. Abererombic, afterwards Speaker, could not understand the morality which gained confidence on purpose to betray, and incited to action on purpose to destroy. It is lamentable to find the name of Wilberforce supporting Castlereagh on this occasion. He supported the measure because he did not believe that Lord Sidmouth would abuse the powers bestowed upon him under the suspension of a constitutional law. He would yield reluctantly for the sake of the poor, and on account of the turbulence and irreligion of the times! Lord Althorp retorted upon Wilberforce, that to give such confidence to ministers was the sure way to destroy the best safeguards of the constitution. Romilly also protested against Mr. Wilberforce's course. He said: "It was now for the first time avowed that spies were in the regular pay of ministers, and were apart of the cruel system of administration. Was not this enough to excite general discontent and disgust? Government carefully avoided bringing persons to trial. Did not this prove they were afraid of investigation? These measures of repression, as they were called, had manifestly increased the mischief. Day after day, encroachments were making on liberty, on the plea that power would be placed in gentle hands. He would entrust such

power in no hands, least of all in those of men who had refused to give the names of those whom they had imprisoned. Was his honourable friend (Mr. Wilberforce) in the house when a petition was presented from an individual who had been seven years in confinement under a former suspension? There were many such cases. An opinion pretty generally prevailed that ministers resorted to these measures of alarm for the purpose of *getting rid of questions of economy* and maintaining themselves in place."

Brougham, still in his early night, ridiculed with much effect the resurrectionary plot. He said: "As to the discontents, were there no laws to check them? However mild, pure, and inoffensive the disposition of the noble secretary, it should be recollected that he was the recorded dupe of the informer Oliver. Who was to give security that the secretary might not be made the tool of a band of informers, whom he had collected round his office, and who were daily filling his ears with tales of terror, of sedition, and rebellion? Much had been said of the employment of spies, and of their respectability and morality! Was it nothing that Oliver had fraudulently used the names of others to win a confidence for the purpose of abusing it, and that for hire? Was it nothing that he was a cheat, in fact, and a murderer in contemplation? Was it nothing that he would have been responsible for every drop of blood shed on that scaffold to which he would have led his blind and miserable victims? The other side of the house seemed to have strange notions of morality! Could a more blackened villain be found than one who went about to ensnare that he might betray, and to corrupt that he might destroy?"

Mr. Canning, whose better days had not come, lent himself to the encroachment on the liberty of the subject. The house, he said, should recollect that the mob of Paris had pillaged the palaces of kings; he would defend the noble lord who had been so harshly attacked; of all men the noble lord was the fittest to be entrusted with such

power. Lord Folkstone, the present Earl Radnor, who in both houses has always been a thoroughly independent member, said :—"He could not refrain from smiling at the honourable gentleman's defence of the noble secretary, remembering, as he well did, the unsparing ridicule with which he had himself assailed the same distinguished personage. (Hear, hear.) Who but recollected the poor doctor—a creature, the diagnosis of whose characteristic infirmity had so often amused the right hon. gentleman !

"The symptoms, a dulness that sits in the head,
And dislike to all changes of place."

Whether in prose or in poetry, the great object of his derision, and that, too, for want of talent. *Now*, he was the fittest person in the land to be entrusted with power, though he was, of all men, the most easily to be duped and misled."

All was unavailing. Two hundred and seventy-six voted for the bill ; only one hundred and eleven against it. On the following day the second reading was carried by eighty votes against thirty. On Friday the 27th, the bill was read a third time and passed. Ministers had the power, until the 1st of March, to imprison anybody whom they suspected or professed to suspect. Oliver was again let loose on the country. Castles had been irretrievably damaged by his unsupported, and, as the jury believed, false evidence against Watson, who, after a seven days' trial had been acquitted. But Mr. Oliver was a man of "good moral character," according to Mr. Lee Keck, and so he was let loose upon the country to betray and destroy.

Bamford, in his "Life of a Radical," says, that soon after his return from imprisonment, without trial, in London, he found that a secret "influence" had been at work, exciting to and carrying on private meetings and suspicious intrigues, and that a well-dressed and apparently well-off stranger had been the chief mover. One day an old man, whom Bamford recognised as an old co-delegate, named Bacon,

from Derby, called upon him, accompanied by "a decent-looking young man, much like a town's weaver." The old man told of a great meeting to be held in Yorkshire, which would give a finishing stroke to the borough-mongers. He seems to have been communicative on further designs, for Bamford says he advised his informant not to attempt to overthrow, by force, a national order of things. Bacon said he was too old a politician to be counselled by one so young as Bamford; and so the old man "drank his beer rather hastily, and took himself off with his company." "Reader," says Bamford, "this pertinacious old man was, in a few days after, arraigned for high treason at Derby, and pleading guilty was, with fourteen others, transported for life; whilst the young man, who was one of the Turners, was hung and beheaded, with the equally unfortunate Brandreth and Ludlam." * * * "That stranger—that betrayer—reader, was OLIVER THE SPY."

Oliver excited an insurrection in Derbyshire; he could do nothing in Lancashire. There was "a small band" of men in Manchester, not named, not even remotely alluded to, in Bamford's history—some of them, however, named by me in a previous chapter—a band receiving, in 1817, accessions of persons led to think about the question of reform from the tyrannical proceedings of government,—who had traced the workings of espionage, and denounced the betrayers. We—for I had the honour of belonging to the body—had never been approached by the spies. They did not dare. Their instructions were to go among the nameless and the friendless. But they had ineffectually attempted to tamper with men who held a middle station between us and the working classes. Our warnings—the warnings of men whose protection of the oppressed inspired confidence—had spread widely; and the native shrewdness of our Sunday-school-instructed population did not rest. Even hot-headed, unreasoning fools, who were disposed to have recourse to physical force, were distrusted as the tools

of government. We had raised the cry, "beware of spies," and it saved Lancashire from the follies committed in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, in 1817, and also from participation in the spy-instigated rising in Scotland three years afterwards. We had begun, besides, to write in Cowdroy's paper, previously containing, like the other local papers, little that was not gleaned from the London journals. Cowdroy, a stout-hearted honest man, was glad of the assistance we rendered him, and bravely encountered the risk of giving utterance to opinions most unpalatable to the powers that then were. We somewhat restrained the expression of our thoughts in order that he might not be prosecuted by the government; for though we could have borne him harmless, so far as expenses were concerned, we could not guarantee him against imprisonment. I sometimes said to him—"Are you not afraid, Cowdroy, of being indicted for seditious libels?" "Not I," was the usual reply: "write away." The following passages from an article in his paper, of November 1st, 1817, on the termination of the special commission at Derby, will show that Manchester was beginning to enjoy the advantages of a free press:—

"It was necessary to prove that the arm of the law is strong enough promptly to arrest and properly to punish the actors in such daring outrages, some of whom seem to have felt no hesitation in adding to their other enormous guilt the deeper crime of cold-blooded and unprovoked murder. Yet it is perhaps of material consequence to the public to endeavour to ascertain the nature, by investigating the origin, of the transactions to which we have referred; for, considering the proceedings of the 9th of June as a '*levying war against the king*,' they assume an aspect which it seems impossible to regard as otherwise than supremely ludicrous. What are the facts as to the commencement of the affair, as far as they appear upon the evidence? Why, that the plot was laid in an obscure public-house one Sunday forenoon, in an assembly fluctuating between the numbers of half a dozen and twenty individuals, in the presence of *two special constables*, who, after cautioning the assembled *traitors* to '*mind what*

they were saying,' and informing them of the high authority with which they were themselves invested, were actually deterred, even subsequent to the breaking up of the meeting, from giving any information to the neighbouring magistrates, by the terrible and appalling threat of being '*put up the chimney*' !!!

"There are a number of assertions sworn to have been made by Brandreth and other leaders in these tumults which it seems impossible rationally to account for, even upon their own views and feelings, in any other manner than by supposing that they were themselves deceived by some prior agent, in order that they might be more effectually instrumental in the deception of others. We allude to the information which this general-in-chief communicated to his army, that '*all England, Scotland, and Ireland would rise that day*;'—to the assertion of Barnes, that '*the keys of the Tower of London were given up to the Hampden Club*;'—to the statement of Weightman, that '*Nottingham had been taken by storm*;'—and again of Brandreth, that '*a great cloud was coming from the north*,' which it would be impossible to resist. These very expressions are so exactly like those of Mr. Oliver, that, coupling them with the notorious fact of this respectable agent of government having been in the neighbourhood of Derby about the time the insurrection took place, it is impossible not to conclude that he had a great share in producing it. Indeed this fact was distinctly asserted both by Mr. Croas and Mr. Denman, and we do not find that it was controverted by any of the crown lawyers. Government having learnt wisdom by the fate of Castles, very *prudently* kept Mr. Oliver out of sight, and it was probably impossible for the agents of the prisoners to find him. Besides, he would of course have declined answering any questions which might tend to criminate himself, and no proof *of his guilt* could lessen the legal responsibility of those who might, *in truth*, have been his victims. Yet it does seem strange that his name and agency were not more prominently insisted on.

"But if it be said that the object of Brandreth and Weightman was to encourage their adherents, we reply that the opposite disheartening effect would be much stronger when the falsehood of their statements was discovered. This, indeed, was soon and strikingly exemplified on their approach towards Nottingham, where the whole rebel army fled in the utmost disorder, at the approach of—*one magistrate and one dragoon* !!!

"We cannot think it possible that Brandreth would knowingly have devoted himself and his followers to absolute and infallible

destruction. He must have been taught to expect very different support from what he found ; and by whom were these expectations created in his mind, if not by Mr. Oliver ?

“The whole citizens of Nottingham experienced none of the horrors of a bombardment ; the keys of the tower remained in the custody of his majesty’s lieutenant ; and though ‘great clouds’ might ‘come from the north’ *nothing else came*. That Mr. Oliver should hold out expectations of support from this neighbourhood is the more probable, because we know, notwithstanding the fact has never yet appeared in print, that this ‘*moral*’ person was extremely active in his endeavours to implicate some of our own townsmen in his villainous designs, that he was particularly solicitous that Manchester should have sent a ‘deputy’ to the celebrated meeting at Thornhill Lees, and that when he failed in his earnest entreaties to induce one gentleman to whom he applied to attend there, he most anxiously sought to obtain from him a recommendation to some other person, who might probably be induced to go.”

The gentleman who was so earnestly entreated to attend the meeting was Mr. Nicholas Whitworth. The person to whom Oliver was so desirous to be recommended was Mr. P. T. Candelet, then an ardent young reformer. The spy did not venture to tell Mr. Whitworth of plots and risings. He was too cunning for that. He talked of a legal meeting, attended by respectable deputies from all parts of the north of England, for a determined but constitutional purpose. Had Mr. Whitworth consented, under these deceptive representations, to attend the meeting, it would have been instantly bruited abroad that the reformers amongst the merchants and manufacturers of Manchester were making common cause with the working classes, and had appointed a deputy for that purpose. Mr. Whitworth was too shrewd a judge of character to be deceived by the plausible government agent, declared he would have nothing to do with him, and having warned Mr. Candelet to be on his guard, that gentleman declined to have any communication with Oliver, who had sought an interview through another medium.

Nearly twenty years after the trials at Derby, it was

- represented to me that some of the persons then transported were still living in banishment. Mr. Deunau, one of their counsel, had been promoted to the judicial bench. He knew that the men had been instigated to their folly by spies employed by government. Many of the whig ministers had, while in opposition, denounced the system of espionage as abominable and wicked. I thought the period was favourable for an application on behalf of the so long expatriated. To the credit of the ministry, thanks to Brotherton, Philips, Gisborne, and other members of parliament, who took the matter up warmly, it was successful. Many had been banished who were but slightly implicated in the so-called insurrection. They had pleaded guilty because they saw that the farmers on the Derbyshire juries, anxious to get home to their harvest work, were determined to convict. They preferred banishment to execution. One sentenced to transportation for life was a lad of eighteen years of age, who, for his boyish offence, was punished by exile for more than eighteen years.

Party spirit was not much less virulent in 1817 than it had been in 1794. I have mentioned that, in the former period, a purely literary association in Liverpool, of which William Roscoe, Dr. Shepherd, and Dr. Currie were members, had considered it prudent to suspend its social meetings in consequence of the persecuting spirit of the times. A similar association existed in Manchester, which, in addition to literary subjects, discussed questions of political economy, and, of consequence, sometimes trenched upon the grounds of general "politics." I have had occasion more than once to notice that the Sidmouth administration had not, like the Pitt administration, the courage to direct their prosecutions against men holding the stations of John Horne Tooke and Thomas Walker; but with feeble hand, wielding enormous and unconstitutional powers, contented itself with entrapping and persecuting such men as John Knight and Samuel Bamford. The members of our

Literary Society were safe individually; but we did not feel that we were safe as an association. The courts gave a strange interpretation to the word "conspiracy;" and that which might be uttered with perfect impunity by the individual, was ruled to be wicked, and seditious, and treasonable when two or three met to "breathe together." We had Jeremy Bentham's assurance that judge-made law, on this subject, was not the law of the land; but we had to consider that, in the event of a trial, we should have to encounter the law as interpreted by the judges. Like the Roscoe Club in Liverpool, we agreed to suspend the meetings of our society, and to discuss questions of literature and political economy by our own firesides. We heard now and then of the outward tory world from one of our number—the only one who resorted to the places where our opponents loved to congregate and recreate—of insult and contumely heaped upon him because he was a reformer. We had one advantage over the reformers of 1794. Commerce had largely extended, in spite of all the trammels with which it had been loaded; and the commercial spirit had begun to mitigate the virulence of party spirit. Thomas Walker had deeply suffered in his business by the conspiracy against him; but the field had become too wide for a similar operation against us. Shuttleworth and Taylor could sell their cotton to men who could not buy it cheaper elsewhere. In like manner, Thomas and Richard Potter could sell their fustians, Brotherton and Harvey their yarns, Baxter his gingham and shirtings, and I my fine Glasgow muslins.

And yet our position was uncomfortable. We were safe ourselves, but every day brought us report of wrong and outrage done to our humble fellow countrymen—wrong and outrage which we felt we could not fully redress. We thought, in our own cheerful homes, of the poor men in prison for alleged political offences—the main offence being that they, like ourselves, were of opinion

that our representative system was susceptible of amendment. The whole aspect of society was unfavourable. The rich seemed banded together to deny the possession of political rights; and the poor seemed to be banding themselves together in an implacable hatred to their employers, who were regarded as their cruel oppressors. Out of this bitter antagonism there seemed to be no other result than some great and destructive convulsion. Many were my aspirations—

“O for a lodge in some vast wilderness,
Some boundless contiguity of shade,
Where rumours of oppression and deceit
Can near reach us more!”

Some of the younger amongst us, like Southey and Coleridge at an earlier period, formed the design of creating a society of our own, in one of the western free states of the American union. It was proposed that ten or twelve, possessing moderate capital, should obtain a tract of land in Ohio, lying along some stream running into a navigable river; that none should possess individually more than a section of six hundred and forty acres, in order that we might not be too widely spread for mutual co-operation and friendly association; that the same quantity of land for each should be bought as a joint-stock company, to be disposed of in smaller portions, with the consent of the community, to millers, blacksmiths, joiners, and persons of like useful occupations who might be disposed to join us; and that we should give our aid and assistance to enable intelligent and industrious farm-servants to emigrate to our colony. It was a pleasant dream, this imagination of a tract some fifty or sixty miles in length by four in breadth gradually filling up with intelligent men, enjoying the rude plenty of the new world with the civilization of the old! Ourselves sitting under our own vines and our own fig-trees, planted with our own hands, surveying our golden wheat waving on land turned up by our own hard labour or

directing care, and offering an asylum, amongst us and around us to the oppressed of our native land! I went over the very ground in 1848, and on the banks of the beautiful Little Miami River, described to John Brooks, my fellow-traveller, our feelings and the reasons why our intentions were not carried out. There was the pain of tearing ourselves from the land of our fathers; and there were the hope, and something like the faith, that truthful principles might yet prevail; and there were the whisperings of conscience that something was required to be done at home before it was abandoned—that the seed should be sown before we had a right to expect the harvest. The design was not formally relinquished. It was cherished as that which might be carried into execution were there no indications of amendment in the mother country. The events of 1819 showed that there was some fructification of the seed that had been sown, and revived the hopes of the previously almost despairing.

A coercive repression of the public utterance of opinion often tends to facilitate its quiet private adoption and progress. Reform principles made considerable advances during the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. Bamford confesses that the noisiest of the radical orators were silenced; and as the loudest were usually the most foolish, the reproach of their folly was, for the time, removed from the cause which they so injudiciously advocated; and soberly-thinking working men began to long for the time when they could join in a rational movement for the attainment of some share in the enactment of the laws which they were bound to obey. In the forced silence of the mere trading demagogues—many of them men who would rather harangue from the platform than ply the shuttle—the middle classes could calmly think of their own exclusion from political rights, and on the results of defective representation, as shown in the wretched legislation and tyrannical proceedings of a “borough-mongering” government.

When that tyranny was exercised with still less regard to law and to constitutional right,—when a legally-convened and peaceably-held meeting was exposed to the sabres of a body of yeomanry, eager to obey the impulses of their own heated tempers and their hatred of all reform,—and when magistrates who directed the sanguinary attack received the thanks of royalty,—it was seen in the wide and deep expressions of indignation, that the principles of rational reform had made great progress during the time between the blanket meeting of March, 1817, and the great St. Peter's Field meeting of August, 1819.

Amongst the quiet but effective labourers for the production of thought had been the Sunday-school teachers. Earnest to impart religious and moral instruction, they had been awakening powers of thought amongst the rising generation which might have lain dormant and useless, or, otherwise directed, have become mischievous and destructive. There, in their upper rooms, Sunday after Sunday, year after year, sacrificing the ease and comfort of their own days of rest, did they, in the discharge of an imperative religious duty, toil on untiredly, in the full faith that the bread thus cast upon the waters would be seen after many days. If there is to be any hero-worship, let it be paid to those patient, unregarded, unrewarded, unknown, often much despised workers in the over-crowded, stifling garret, or the dark under-ground school-room. With the single undeviating purpose of promoting the eternal welfare of their pupils, they were preparing them for the fit discharge of their social and political duties. They were creating THOUGHT amongst the hitherto unthinking masses. From amongst those teachers were to arise men to earn, by their well-directed industry and the excellence of their character, a higher position in society, and the opportunities of higher usefulness—in civic authority, and even in the senate; whilst in the lowest classes was introduced a leaven which, if not extinguished by state interference, or by

spiritual wickedness in high places, promises to leaven the whole mass. To this voluntary labour, unpaid labour, heaven-directed but despised labour—quiet, unostentations, almost unseen—is mainly owing our exemption from sanguinary revolution; and to the continuance of such labour must still be mainly owing what we have yet to gain in the recognition and practical operation of the great principles of internal government, and external friendly intercourse with the family of man.

In the comparative lull of political agitation, a warm discussion took place in the Manchester papers about the exportation of cotton yarn. “An old manufacturer,” who was, I believe, Mr. Ratcliffe, of Stockport, in long and frequent letters, earnestly warned the Manchester public of the distress that would accrue from allowing foreigners to purchase our twist. He took it for granted that what was not exported would be woven up at home, and hence it was easy to calculate how many additional weavers might thus be employed. Tens of thousands of looms might be set to work, with all their adjuncts of winders and warpers, by a single stroke of the legislative pen. How oppressive and tyrannical it was to cut off the source of all this profitable employment! And then there were other men writing in the papers against permitting foreigners to settle in Manchester, and, by buying goods direct from the manufacturers, taking the bread out of the mouths of our own native merchants. It was asserted that there were some foreigners who were so impudent as to buy, not finished goods—that would not have been so very bad—but fustians in the grey, and having them cut, dyed, and dressed themselves. Nay, there were some of our merchants who were bold enough to assert, that unless an end was put to this invasion of native privilege, we might have foreigners actually becoming manufacturers here! Poor Ratcliffe was assailed unmercifully by a set of young writers in *Cowdroy*, who quoted Adam Smith against him. I made rough work with the

book authorities. I quoted not only Adam Smith and Josiah Child, but all the other political economists, English and French, whose works I had either read or read of, and triumphantly asked whether their fantastic theories were to be set against the practical knowledge of Mr. Ratcliffe, the "old manufacturer" of Stockport? He was impervious both to argument and ridicule. He honestly believed that he was right; but finding that the public would not believe with him, he bethought him that if we could weave by steam, we should beat the foreign weavers, and work up all our yarn at home. The great difficulty was how to dress warps so as to admit of continuous working in the loom, and that difficulty he set himself to overcome. He succeeded, and met the usual reward of ingenious inventors; he introduced a new mode of production, and it produced nothing to himself. He was a public benefactor, and was laughed at as a visionary schemer.

During that lull of political agitation we had also much talk about the theory that population increases in a greater ratio than the increase of the means of subsistence, and many, out-Malthusing Malthus, began to speculate about the evil of supporting paupers who, Nature's table being already full, ought rather to be allowed to die off! Some of our whigs who had "ratted" from their reform principles, on the pretence that they had been shocked by the atrocities of the French revolution, were the foremost and eagerest in the promulgation of these opinions; and there were indications of a movement, even in the face of the corn-law and enormous taxation, for the total abolition of legal relief to the poor. The Scotch could do without poor-laws, or with poor-laws allowed to go into disuetude, and why might not we? Dr. Chalmers caught at this cry, and in an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, on the "Causes and Cure of Pauperism," advanced the doctrine, that a legal provision for the poor increased the poverty it professed to relieve. I had previously seen the necessity, not of abolishing the

Scotch poor-laws, but of rigidly enforcing them upon a landed proprietary which, drawing large rents, contributed nothing to the relief of poverty. Having seen in Lanarkshire an old man of eighty toiling his way, up to his knees in snow, to my brother's house, I asked him why he did not stay at home and be relieved by his parish. He said, "Ah, sir! they gie me a shilling a week, and that disna keep me, and I canna help coming out to beg." I found, on inquiry, that by the compulsion of seen distress acting on benevolence, my brother paid more in relieving wandering beggars—beggars sent out because they might be starved to death at home—than I paid in poor-rates on my warehouse in Manchester, which happened to be of just the same rent as he paid for his farm. In my "Letters from Scotland," written in the summer of 1816, and purporting to be from the pen of "An English Commercial Traveller," I had indignantly denounced the heartless system; and when I found that the doctrines of Dr. Chalmers, its apologist and abettor, were eagerly adopted by certain classes in Manchester, I employed Cowdroy's press in printing a pamphlet in reply to his article in the *Edinburgh Review*, relentlessly exposing its fallacies,—for which I was heartily abused, in Glasgow especially, where good old women and good young ladies said that nobody but an atheist could oppose any opinions held by Dr. Chalmers. My pamphlet was only a stone thrown into the strong stream, but the ripple it caused was seen by others able to throw stronger impediments into the current.

In this year, 1817, the history of which we are now passing, there occurred an astounding instance of the indifference of the inhabitants of Manchester to an important public right. There had long been a wooden bridge, free to all foot passengers, connecting Manchester with Salford, of very great convenience to crowds of working people, who had to pass to their meals or their work several times a day, from the one township to the other. A number

of gentlemen met and resolved, that instead of the old wooden bridge there should be a handsome stone one thrown over the Irwell; and very great was the laudation poured out upon them for their public spirit. A joint-stock company was formed, and an act of parliament was obtained, giving powers to take down the old bridge; but instead of a clause retaining the long-established public right, there was one empowering the collection of the toll of a halfpenny from every foot passenger! It is said that, in after years, when the clause was pointed out to Lord Shaftesbury, he remarked that if his attention had been directed to it at the time, he would have struck it out, even although no one had appeared to protest against it. Charity leads to the supposition that when the gentlemen, so much lauded for their improving spirit, had erected a handsome bridge, with commodious approaches, they thought they had established a right to exact the halfpenny; but very few regretted that the speculation was profitless. The bridge and its approaches, within some two hundred yards of the Exchange, had remained a desert for thirty years. The full tide of human existence which flowed down Market-street had, for all that time, been suddenly arrested there. The speculators had lost every farthing of money they advanced. Even those who lent money on mortgage, unable to obtain anything like the usual rate of interest, were glad at last to accept a composition, raised by subscription, that the ancient right might be restored. In 1848 the bridge was thrown open to the public. Of old persons there were numbers who, in passing once more free over the inky stream, said, exultingly, "Well, those who took our right away one-and-thirty years ago, have not made much of it anyhow." We shall hear, hereafter, of provision being made against similar encroachments on public rights, of Vegetable Wright and his Flixton footpath case, and of sundry inroads resisted by the society for the preservation of ancient footways on the secluded privacy

sought to be acquired by the exclusion of the unwashed multitudes from pleasant field roads, their own unalienable property. Are these trifles beneath the notice of the historian? The vindication of a right in small things keeps alive the spirit of resistance to greater unjust encroachments; and the man who preserves a footway where the humble mechanic can take his wife and children through fresh and verdant fields is as much a benefactor as he who gives to the public a park or an arboretum. The assertion of ancient rights of footways in Manchester led to the establishment of additional sources of enjoyment to the industrial classes. A generous subscription of £30,000, a few years ago, put three parks, of thirty acres each, into the possession of the public; and to these places of recreation, as well laid out as the grounds near a nobleman's mansion, the humblest of our population have free access, injuriously touching nothing and destroying nothing, but proving that the poor will be conservative, even of beauty, when confidently trusted.

CHAPTER VIII.

INDEMNITY TO MINISTERS.

THE Regent, in his speech on the meeting of parliament, 27th January, 1818, having assured the two houses that the confidence he had invariably felt in the stability of our national prosperity had not been disappointed, said—“The improvement which has taken place in almost every branch of our domestic industry, and the present state of public credit, afford abundant proof that the difficulties under which the country was labouring were chiefly to be ascribed to temporary causes.” He went on to say: “So important a change could not fail to withdraw from the disaffected the principal means by which they had availed themselves for the purpose of fomenting a spirit of discontent, which unhappily lead to insurrection and treason; and his royal highness entertains the most confident expectation, that the state of peace and tranquillity to which the country is now restored, will be manifested against all attempt to disturb it, by the persevering vigilance of the magistracy, and by the loyalty and good sense of the people.” The Earl of Liverpool in the lords, and Castle-reagh in the commons, in reply to questions from Lord Holland and Lord Althorp, announced the intencion of ministers to bring in a bill for the repeal of the act for suspending the operation of the Habeas Corpus Act. As it was well known that this was to be followed by an act of indemnity for all the illegal and oppressive measures that were resorted to during that suspension, a meeting of some of the leading reformers in Manchester was held, at which it was resolved that a petition should be addressed to the House of Commons, declaring the falsehood of the allega-

tions on which the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended. The following is a copy of the petition :—

“ That the petitioners heard, with great pain and uneasiness, the alarming statements which were currently circulated during the early part of the past year, as to the evil designs entertained by the labouring classes in their neighbourhood, and concealed under the disguise of an anxiety to obtain a reform in the representation of the people ; that the petitioners have found themselves obliged to conclude that the impression produced by the statements to which they have now referred, greatly influenced the decision of the house in concurring with the proposals of his majesty’s ministers, entirely to suspend some, and materially to abridge other of the most valuable rights and privileges which Englishmen derive from the bravery and wisdom of their ancestors, and which afford their best safeguards against the encroachments of arbitrary power and the abuses of intolerant party spirit ; that, although firmly convinced, at the period when those measures were proposed by his majesty’s ministers to the consideration of the house, that the circumstances of the times did not require, and that constitutional vigilance could not acquiesce in the suspension of the act of Habeas Corpus, and the other encroachments adopted by the house, the petitioners thought it most proper to defer the expression of their sentiments upon this important subject to a period, when the heat of political feeling being somewhat allayed, they might be enabled to examine with maturer deliberation, with more scrutinising caution, and with more rigid impartiality, the truth of the information upon which, judging from the reports of its secret committees, the house must be presumed to have acted ; that the petitioners could not avoid feeling that the character, not only of the towns in which they reside, but of the very populous district that surrounds them, and perhaps even of the county of Lancaster at large, was involved in the charges of disaffection, disloyalty, and treason, which were so lavishly heaped on the most numerous and the most industrious class of its population ; that the petitioners take leave to assert to the house, not only that the conduct of the labouring part of their fellow-townsmen at that period did not exhibit the slightest tendency to insubordination or violence, but that they sustained an unparalleled extremity of distress with fortitude the most exemplary and heroic ; that without stating themselves to concur in the propriety, or to defend the prudence of all the political conduct of the working classes in their neighbourhood, the petitioners have no hesitation in assuring the house, as the result of their careful and assiduous inquiries, that

the proceedings of that part of the population have been completely and most grossly misrepresented; that as far as regards the meeting of the 10th of March, familiarly known by the designation of the "blanket meeting," nothing could exceed the quietness and order with which the populace proceeded to it, and demeaned themselves throughout its continuance; that it had been publicly announced several days, and not the slightest intimation of its imputed illegality was given; that no attempt was made to disperse it by means of the civil power, but that, without warning, and, as the petitioners verily believe, without even reading the riot act, doubtful as it is, whether, under such circumstances, that statute could legally be enforced, the dragoons, acting under the orders of the magistrates, dashed impetuously amongst the multitude, and compelled it to seek safety in flight, although magistrates at that period did not possess the discretionary power over public meetings with which the house has since invested them; and between two and three hundred persons, who were proceeding on the road to London with petitions, were, in the course of the before-mentioned day, apprehended and lodged, under circumstances of great hardship, in a prison which contained, before their arrival, nearly three times the number of prisoners it was originally calculated to receive; and that eight of the persons then arrested, who refused to give bail for their future appearance, were committed to Lancaster Castle, and after being detained in gaol amongst prisoners of the most profligate and abandoned description for nearly six months, were at length discharged without trial; that on Saturday, the 29th of March, public apprehension was most generally and painfully excited, by the appearance of an advertisement issued by the magistracy and police of Manchester, bearing date the preceding day, and in which they stated, that 'information, on which they could place the fullest reliance, had reached them, of a most daring and traitorous conspiracy, the object of which was nothing less than open rebellion and insurrection;' that 'the town of Manchester was one of the first pointed out for attack, and the moment fixed upon for the diabolical enterprise was the night of the 30th of March;' that as the petitioners could not think it possible that the magistrates or police would wantonly or thoughtlessly trifle with public alarm, by making so horrible a charge on dubious or insufficient grounds, they confidently expected to see such daring and desperate offenders as those implicated in this 'diabolical enterprise' must necessarily be so supposed to be, brought to early trial and condign punishment, particularly as on the 23rd of April, when the examination of the supposed delinquents must, as the petitioners con-

ceive, have brought the evidence against them under his magisterial cognizance, the Rev W. R. Hay, stipendiary chairman of the Salford quarter sessions, did, in his address to the grand jury, allude to the subject in the following terms:—‘As judicial inquiries would be instigated against the offending parties, it would not be just to enter much upon the subject; but he might be permitted to say, should such inquiries take place, purposes of the blackest enormity must be disclosed to the public, and that those who professed to doubt their existence, would finally be constrained to admit the existence of the whole of them;’ that the suspension of the act of *habeas corpus* being, as appears by the term of the bill itself, applicable only to persons ‘suspected of entertaining designs hostile to his majesty’s government,’ the petitioners conceive that it never was intended by the house to supersede the necessity of public judicial inquiries into charges of treason, distinct and specified in their character, and of unparalleled atrocity in their complexion; that the petitioners are therefore persuaded that the house will learn with astonishment, that all the persons arrested as participators in this alleged conspiracy have been discharged without trial; and they would further represent to the house, that if the slightest suspicion of the guilt of the parties still remains, it is most dangerous to the welfare and tranquillity of the country at large, to restore to liberty, and consequently to the capability of doing mischief, men who have connected themselves with a design of such dreadful wickedness! whilst, on the other hand, if there is no foundation for the diabolical conspiracy imputed to them, every principle of justice and humanity imperiously demand that they should be publicly and legally delivered from the charges to which they have been so foully and falsely subjected; that the attention of the petitioners having been aroused by the charge of these alleged conspirators without trial, some of them have entered upon an extensive and rigid investigation of the grounds upon which traitorous and rebellious proceedings were imputed to the parties taken into custody, and the result of the investigation is a most positive and irrefragable conviction that no such conspiracy existed, that no violent designs were in contemplation, and that no measure dangerous to public tranquillity was ever proposed or discussed at any of the meetings which took place, except by hired spies and informers; that whilst the petitioners are convinced that no effort was left untried by these wicked and detestable emissaries, to ensnare and delude the labouring classes into acts of riot and insubordination, they cannot but think it will be satisfactory to the house to reflect that the illegal schemes and exhortations of these miscreants, though

addressed to men suffering the most distressing privations, have been so eminently and uniformly unsuccessful ; that the conviction of the petitioners, as to the activity of the spies, in endeavouring to engage persons known to the petitioners for parliamentary reform, in their own villainous machinations, does not rest on general and indefinable impressions ; but the petitioners believe that their habitual violence, their endeavours to seduce individuals to the commission of specific crimes, which would deservedly subject them to capital punishments, their officiousness in appointing meetings in different parts of the country, their activity in procuring a large attendance at such meetings, their assumed names, their apprehension and immediate discharge, and their connection with the magistracy or police, can be clearly and indisputably demonstrated ; the petitioners would further state to the house, that, during the early part of the last year nocturnal domiciliary visits by subordinate agents of the police, without the exhibition of warrant or authority for such proceedings, during which the greatest abuse and inhumanity was displayed, were of disgracefully frequent occurrence ; the petitioners, therefore, conceiving that the house could neither foresee nor intend to sanction such proceedings as they have enumerated, and that the employment of spies in the manner and to the extent to which it has prevailed in the neighbourhood of the petitioners is pregnant with the most dangerous consequences to his majesty's peaceable and well-disposed subjects, and anxious also to vindicate to the country at large the loyalty and good character of that extensive and populous district, do humbly, but most earnestly intreat that the house will be pleased to institute a strict inquiry into the truth of the matters stated in this petition, and also into the general proceedings, not only of the labouring classes, but of the magistracy and police of Manchester and its neighbourhood, during the early part of the past year ; and the petitioners do hereby pledge themselves to use the utmost diligence and alacrity in furnishing the house with such evidence as they confidently believe will most fully and completely establish the conclusions they themselves have formed on the subject."

Mr. George Philips, on presenting this petition, entered at considerable length upon the events of 1817, of which a sketch has already been given, and concluded by stating his intention, at some early day, to refer it to a committee. In the meantime the names of the twenty-seven persons who had signed the petition, and had offered to incur the expense

and trouble of obtaining evidence to lay before the House of Commons, were procured by parties opposed to any inquiry, and printed on a broad sheet, which was pasted up in counting houses, as a pretty plain intimation that the men who were daring enough to assert that government had any hand in exciting the discontented to overt acts of sedition, could not expect to have any commercial transactions with the loyal friends of social order.

A number of other petitions were sent by individuals who had suffered under the suspension of the law. Old John Knight represented that, on the night of the 30th of March, 1817, he had been apprehended in bed by Nadin, handcuffed, and conveyed to the New Bailey prison, and kept there till the 6th of April, and then sent, heavily ironed, to London, and committed to Tothill-fields prison on suspicion of high treason;—that on the 10th of April he was removed to Reading jail, where he remained till the 9th of July, whence he was taken to Salisbury jail, where he was put into a small, gloomy, stinking felons' cell, and surrounded by noisy, brutal prisoners of that description;—that he was then removed to Worcester jail, where he was confined to the end of the year, and then, being told he would be discharged, he proceeded to London, where he had to wait till the 31st of January, when the attorney general moved the discharge of all the recognizances of the state prisoners;—and that he then returned home “impaired in health by long and close imprisonment, and his family and pecuniary affairs incalculably injured.” Joseph Mitchell, in like manner, complained of an incarceration for 240 days, on a charge of high treason, never attempted to be substantiated. William Ogden stated that he, an old man of 74, had been apprehended by Nadin on the 9th of March, 1817, and sent off to Horsefonger-lane prison, where the ponderous irons with which he was loaded “broke his belly,” and dangerous hernia ensued; and he prayed the house not to pass an act of indemnity which should prevent his seeking redress for

his imprisonment and the cruelty which he had experienced. William Benbow, of Manchester, stated that he had been apprehended in Dublin on the 16th of May, and sent to the house of correction in Coldbath-fields, where he was confined eight months and then discharged, without trial, two hundred miles from his home, without the means of conveying himself thither. Amongst the petitioners was Elijah Dixon, now a prosperous manufacturer of lucifer matches, who was suspected of dealing in matters even more inflammatory. His statement set forth, "that the petitioner was, on the 12th of March, 1817, whilst following his lawful occupation, apprehended by a warrant issued by Lord Sidmouth, and carried to London in double irons, and was, on the 15th of the same month, committed to Tothill-fields bridewell by the same noble lord, on suspicion of high treason, and there detained till the 13th of November, although the same noble lord must, or might, have known that he was perfectly innocent of the crime imputed to him; the petitioner, therefore, prays that the house will please to consider the justice of making the said noble lord responsible for the loss of time of the petitioner, and for the injuries which his family has suffered in consequence of his long, unjust, and unredressed imprisonment; he also prays that they will be pleased to adopt such a reform in the election of members to serve in the house, as shall give each man a feeling sense that he is represented, and enable him once more proudly to boast of our glorious constitution in king, lords, and commons." Samuel Bamford, whose apprehension by Nadin has already been described, was also amongst the number of the petitioners. His prayer was, "that the house will no longer countenance a system of terror, of blood, and of oppression, by granting to his majesty's ministers a bill, indemnifying them from the consequences of outrages by them committed against the constitution of this realm."

Mr. G. Philips, on the 5th of March, made his motion

for an inquiry into the conduct of spies and informers with respect to treasonable and seditious practices, and in the course of his speech said, "he would not assert that ministers had made the plot, but he would say that they had made the most of it; and no instruments could be found so convenient for their purposes as spies and informers, by whose means the dread of violence and treason was kept alive, and the attention both of parliament and the public was effectually diverted from those questions of political economy and retrenchment which had been so peculiarly harassing to the government." Mr. F. Robinson (Cobbett's "Prosperity Robinson") said he believed, on his honour and conscience, that the petitions were false, and he begged the house, on behalf of a calumniated government, a calumniated magistracy, and in the sacred names of truth and justice, to reject the motion. Mr. Blackburne, the member for Lancashire, said that the twenty-seven names which were said to be signed to the petition were not the names of most respectable people, as had been stated, but, on the contrary, were those of some of the lower classes of society. Besides, what they stated could not be true, because he had received a letter signed by three magistrates, denying the truth of their allegations. After a pretty long debate the house divided. There were against the motion 162, for it 69, being a majority of 93 against inquiry. A previous motion to a similar effect, moved by Lord Folkstone, now Earl Radnor, had met a similar fate, there being against it 167, for it 58, majority against inquiry 109. The bill of indemnity was read a first time on the 9th of March, the number voting against all redress for violations of the law by ministers, magistrates, and constables being 190, while the votes against the bill were only 64. Amongst the speakers was Sir Samuel Romilly, who begged the house to consider well the precedent it was about to establish. "In time of profound peace," he said, "on any appearance of discontent, or any alarm of insurrection, the Habeas Corpus

Act might be suspended ; and the suspension having once taken place, magistrates were at liberty to disregard all law,—to exercise what arbitrary acts of power they thought proper,—spies and informers were to be busily employed to betray the rash and inconsiderate, who were labouring under the pressure of penury and distress, to their destruction,—and, under cover of indemnity, a total denial of justice was to prevail for those who had suffered grievous wrongs.”

The reason why only twenty-seven names were put to the petition praying for inquiry was, that it was a document pledging all who attached their signatures to a heavy responsibility, both of expense and labour. They consisted mainly of the persons whom Richard Potter liked to designate as the “small but determined band.” There were men amongst them of ancient family, of great wealth, and of no inconsiderable talents, and they all held respectable stations in a commercial and manufacturing community. They were men, also, of the class in which, in better times, members of parliament for counties and large boroughs were to be found, in lieu of the Blackburnes, who said they were of the “lower orders,” and not “respectable.” To have any sympathy, then, with the poverty-stricken multitude, except when they came with bated breath and pauper accents, was to forfeit all claim to the name of gentleman.

The prosperity boasted of in the Regent’s speech was of short duration, furnishing another proof that a nation cannot continue prosperous when food is dear. Wages, as usual when the price of bread is high, were low. The operative cotton spinners forbidden to speak of politics, as treason against the government, struck against their masters for an advance of wages. The contest grew more bitter the longer it lasted ; and in an attack on Mr. Gray’s mill, supposed to be for the purpose of destroying or damaging the machinery, some shots were fired by the

soldiers or police officers placed within, by which some were wounded and one man killed. The coroner's jury brought in a verdict of justifiable homicide. Sidmouth, who had convinced his conscience that severity was mercy, rejoiced in the verdict, and in the committal to prison of some radicals, who had not profited by the lessons read to them during the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. Writing to Lord Ellenborough, to cheer him after his defeat by William Hone, he says:—"The combination at Manchester is now nearly dissolved. The verdict of the jury in the case of the person killed in the attack on Gray's mill, the arrest of Johnson, Baguley, and Drummond, who are lodged in Chester gaol, the failure of pecuniary supplies, and the admirable arrangements of Sir John Byng, in conjunction with the civil authorities, have effected this fortunate change." His complacent lordship had soon to find that a forced tranquillity was a transient one. He had not the good harvest of 1813 to aid his endeavours; and wheat at 80s., intended to be the minimum price by the framers of the 1815 corn law, revived the radical agitation which he believed he had put down by his wholesome, peace-giving, content-creating severities.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. JOHN EDWARD TAYLOR'S TRIAL.

THE trial of Mr. John Edward Taylor for libel was occasioned by that bitter party spirit which sought every seemingly safe opportunity of throwing contumely upon reformers. He was one of the "twenty-seven" who signed the petition to the House of Commons, which gave so much offence to the powers that then were in Manchester, and there was a strong suspicion that he was its author. If he could not be indicted for sedition and treason, he might be reached in some other way; if he could not be disgraced, he might, at least, be lowered in public estimation by exclusion from local office. On the first of July, 1818, a meeting of the commissioners of police for Salford was held, for the purpose of appointing assessors; and a list of the names of persons intended to be proposed, amongst which was that of Mr. Taylor, was lying on the table. When the list was read, Mr. John Greenwood said,—“I think I heard some gentleman object to Mr. Taylor.” Not finding any one respond to the invited objection, he again said,—“Some gentleman has objected to Mr. Taylor.” No one had objected. Mr. Gill asked, “Who is this Mr. Taylor?” Mr. Greenwood replied,—“He is one of those reformers who go about the country making speeches.” Mr. Joseph Brotherton observed, that Mr. Taylor would not make a worse assessor for being a politician, for if he was a reformer he was a moderate one. “Moderate, indeed!” replied Greenwood. “He was the author of a handbill that caused the Manchester Exchange to be set on fire in 1812.” Mr. Brotherton observed, that he thought it behoved a person to have

good authority before venturing upon such assertions. Mr. Greenwood said, he had good authority for it. Mr. Taylor hearing of these assertions in the Exchange, in the street, and in company, sent a note to Mr. Greenwood, requesting to know on what authority they were made. There was no reply. After waiting two days a second note was sent; still there was no reply. Mr. Taylor requested me to take a third note, and personally to obtain an answer. Things began to look serious. I said, "Will you fight, Taylor, if he should refer to that kind of satisfaction?" "Certainly I will," he said. "Have you ever fired a pistol in your life?" I asked. "I have not," was the reply. "Then you shall not have me as your second, for you would be as likely to wing me as to shoot Mr. Greenwood." Taylor seriously begging that I would be grave, I said, "I will take your message, but understand me clearly, I never will in my lifetime have anything to do with a duel. You cannot prove that you were not the author of the placard by sending a bullet through him, and you will be an unmitigated ass if you give him the chance of sending one through you. If there is to be a descent to such folly, I retire."

With Mr. Taylor's missive in my hand, I went to Greenwood's warehouse. When he had opened the note which I gave to him, and had read a few lines of it, he asked, "What's this about?" I was at the time making some remark to a gentleman from Kington, who was in the counting-room, and did not answer the question, as Mr. G. continued reading. When he had done he repeated the question. I said,—“I presume the cards Mr. Taylor has sent sufficiently explain his meaning.” He said,—“I don't want to be troubled with notes from Mr. Taylor; I know nothing at all about the business.” I said,—“Mr. Taylor wishes you to explain on what grounds you asserted that he was the author of the hand-bill.” He replied,—“I did not assert any such thing; I only said that he was reported to be the author.” “And

you made that a ground for his exclusion from a public office. Am I to tell Mr. Taylor that you did not assert that he was the author?" He said,—“You may tell Mr. Taylor what you like; I don't want to have anything to say to him. Let him mind his business, and I will mind mine.” I said,—“Mr. Taylor will not allow his character to be spoken of in the way it is reported you spoke of it.” “Does Mr. Taylor mean to say that he was not the author of the handbill?” “Mr. Taylor will not answer that question until you have explained your reasons for considering him the author.” “I am not a political man,” he replied; “I don't meddle with politics, and it would be better for Mr. Taylor that he did not; but if people will go about to disturb the peace and create disaffection, I deem it my duty to take notice of them.” “If, sir? Do you mean to say that Mr. Taylor has ever attempted to disturb the peace and create disaffection?” I will not be pumped,” he replied. “Your name is Prentice, is it?” “It is.” “Well, then, Mr. Prentice, it would be better for you and Mr. Taylor to mind your business, and let politics alone.” I said,—“Mr. Greenwood, that is our consideration. Mr. Taylor must take care that his character is let alone, and he wants from you a direct answer to his notes.” “I don't want anything to do with Mr. Taylor or his notes.” “Is that your answer, sir?” I asked. He replied,—“You may say what you like.” “Very well, sir. Good morning.” And so I left him, with a pretty strong conviction that he was not exactly the person that would run rashly into a duel, even with a man who had never in his life fired off a pistol.

Taylor was, naturally, much irritated, and, smarting at the repetition of vulgar insult, he sent the following note to his tradueer :—

“Sir,—Your not having given my friend, Mr. Prentice, any explanation as to the subject referred to in my former note, compels me to consider you as the fabricator of the report in question.

"I therefore now tell you, that as you have had the baseness to traduce my character, without having the manliness to justify your own conduct,—as you have made assertions respecting me equally false as they are malicious, and met the attempts of my friend to procure from you a candid avowal or disavowal of your conduct, by new insinuations still more unjustifiable than the former, you have proved yourself a liar, a slanderer, and a scoundrel.

"I shall not fail to make my opinion of you at least as public as are your calumnies against me ; and I shall take the earliest opportunity that presents itself of telling you to your face what I think of you.

I am, &c.,

"JOHN EDWARD TAYLOR.

"Toll-lane Buildings, Thursday afternoon,
July 16th, 1818."

Mr. Greenwood having, four or five days after receiving this note, repeated to Mr. Brotherton that he had good authority for charging Mr. Taylor with having written the placard, that gentleman published a letter in *Cowdroy's Gazette*, referring to the correspondence, and stating that a copy of it should lie at the printer's for public inspection.

The grand jury, at the Salford quarter sessions, on the 27th of October, found an indictment against John Edward Taylor, late of Salford, chapman, for that he, being a person of an evil and malignant disposition, and intending and devising, as much as in him lay, to injure and vilify the good name, fame, credit, and reputation of John Greenwood, with force and arms, of great hatred, malice, and ill will towards the said John Greenwood, wickedly, maliciously, and unlawfully did write, and cause and procure to be written, certain false, scandalous, and defamatory words, &c.

Knowing, as Mr. Taylor did, the nature of the court of quarter sessions of Salford, his solicitor, Mr. Atkinson, applied for and obtained a writ of *certiorari* to remove the indictment into the Court of King's Bench. The trial took place at the Lancaster spring assizes, on the 29th of March, 1819. Mr. Taylor, who had resolved to undertake his defence in person, was accompanied by Mr. Edward Baxter,

Mr. Joseph Brotherton, Mr. F. R. Atkinson, Mr. John Shuttleworth, Mr. Rickards, my friend Mr. John Childs, of Bungay, and myself, that he might see friendly faces round him while he was in a position of some danger. Searlett, afterwards Lord Abinger, who was employed for the prosecution, made a very short speech, assuming the utmost *nonchalance*, as if the jury could not for a single moment doubt the propriety of finding a verdict of guilty where the libel was so flagrant. "It would be a mere waste of time," he said, "to enter into a detail of circumstances which cannot be the subject of your consideration, or at all influence you in the verdict you are to pronounce;" the defendant would have an opportunity in the Court of King's Bench, when called up for judgment, to urge any extenuatory circumstances; all that the jury had to do was to inquire whether he had written the letter, and if its contents were libellous. And then he dropped down his portly person into his seat with an air that plainly said, "There's an end on't. You have no choice but to say 'guilty.'" The only evidence offered was the proof of publication.

Mr. Taylor took a legal objection, citing a case from the law reports. The old east-iron-faced judge listened impatiently. "Have you done now?" he asked, in his gruffest voice.

Mr. Taylor.—Yes, my lord.

Baron Wood.—Then there's nothing in it!

Never was poor defendant cut so short before. "Have you done now?" "Yes, my lord." "Then there's nothing in it." It was as pretty a sequence of three sentences as ever was uttered; and for months afterwards we never recollected it without loud laughter. The defendant turned from the judge to the jury, and told them that they were the sole judges of the law as well as of the fact. He said:—

"I protest, gentlemen, against truth being visited with the penalties of falsehood. I protest against the doctrine of the courts, that the truth of a libel constitutes an aggravation of the charge; and prepared

as I am on this occasion to justify every word I have written, and to prove every accusation I have made, I would give no man the power of undermining the basis of my defence, by a tame, spiritless acquiescence in those odious *dicta* of servile lawyers, which reason, and justice, and truth equally deprecate and disclaim. What, indeed, can be more monstrous than the position, that the utterance of truth is an offence rightly punishable by the *criminal* law? What can be more inconsistent, than that you, who would shrink from the baseness of personal intercourse with a liar, should yet be called upon to render amenable to fine, or imprisonment, or both, him who has conscientiously confined himself to truth?"

He proceeded to impress upon the jury that there was no proof of the falsehood and malice charged against him in the indictment. He told them that they must be satisfied, by *evidence*, that he was the false, wicked, and malicious person described, before they could find him guilty; he said that he was the person defamed, and not Mr. Greenwood; he detailed the whole of the circumstances as I have related them; he offered to produce witnesses to prove the truth of all that he had asserted; and he concluded his speech by saying:—

"Gentlemen; upon the broad principle both of the truth of my statements as respects Greenwood, and of the intolerable provocation I have received, I feel myself entitled to your verdict. I have not, for I could not, address you in eloquent or oratorical declamation, but I have told you 'a plain, unvarnished tale;' I have set before you the facts as they really occurred, with those observations upon them which the circumstances of the case seemed to me to require. An apprehension of consequences, personal to myself, should never induce me to supplicate for your verdict; but let me again remind you, that you, and you alone, are the judges of the law as well as of the facts; and let me entreat, that with the full view of all the facts before you, you will upon this occasion prove yourselves defenders and guardians of the truth. Place yourselves in my situation—remember the provocation I have received—consider what would have been your own conduct, and then, following the great principle of Christian morality, '*so do to me as ye would that, in similar circumstances, I should do unto you?*'"

Mr. Scarlett was noted for his quick perception of a jury's

feelings. He had no doubt seen that at least one of the jurors, the foreman, Mr. J. Rylands, of Warrington, had listened with deep attention to Mr. Taylor's indignant protest against truth being punished with the penalties of falsehood, and to his confident assurance that, if the court would allow him, he would, then and there, prove that *he* was the person who had been defamed and vilified. He no doubt saw that there was one determined man who would impress upon his fellow-jurors the injustice of finding guilty on charges not only not proven, but in the face of an offer to prove the whole of the injustice and provocation offered to the defendant. It was not safe to let the case go thus to the jury. There might not be witnesses present to prove the truth of Mr. Taylor's narrative; if there were, they might break down in some points of their evidence: at all events, the examination of witnesses would give him the opportunity of a *REPLY*,—of having the last word,—of trying his certainly strong powers in influencing a jury, and thus to remove the impression which Mr. Taylor's speech had made. He hastily resolved to give the defendant "rope enough."

Mr. Taylor.—I offer my witnesses to the court, if your lordship thinks proper to hear them.

Mr. Scarlett.—I shall not object to your proving what you have stated to the jury; for I hold it extremely wrong, Mr. Taylor, that you should state anything you are not prepared to prove.

Mr. Taylor.—If his lordship consents, I shall examine my witnesses.

Mr. Scarlett.—My lord, I shall make no objections to the witnesses on the part of the defendant being examined. I will give him rope enough.

Mr. Taylor.—Very well. Call Joseph Brotherton.

Mr. Brotherton was called, and in his placid way stated what Mr. Greenwood had said of Mr. Taylor. His quietly-given evidence seeming to tell on the jury, Cross, also

employed for the prosecution, seeing the mistake committed by Searlett, objected to the line of examination; but the latter was reminded of his promise to give "rope enough."

In cross-examination Searlett asked: "Well, now, is the office of assessor one of any emolument?"—*Answer*: "No." "Or of honour?"—*Answer*: "No; but a person would think himself degraded in being considered unworthy to fill it."—*Scarlett*: "You know that is not evidence, Mr. Brotherton, but you think it may have some influence with the jury."

Mr. C. Rickards was then called, who stated that, in consequence of what had been said at the meeting of police commissioners, Mr. Taylor's name was left out of the list of assessors. I was the next witness, and detailed the conversation that had taken place between Greenwood and myself. This closed the defendant's case.

Searlett then rose, determined to punish the man who had compelled him to an imprudent concession. Taylor had made the apology for undertaking his own defence that he had determined on a course which he could not expect any gentleman at the bar to take. This Mr. Scarlett represented to be a gross libel on the bar as composed of a set of servile, spiritless, base, and grovelling wretches who had not the courage to do their duty. He went carefully through the whole defence, to show that Mr. Taylor had been unnecessarily and unreasonably exacting. In reference to the language used in the last note he said he "had seldom found that the pursuit of reform mended a man's manners;" he said that Mr. Taylor was a man who was in the habit of making speeches; "I have no doubt he has made more speeches in the county of Lancaster than I have done;" and accused me of stiffness and hauteur in making a dry and abrupt demand for Mr. Greenwood's authority. He concluded a most bitter and a most unfair attack on the defendant by saying:—"He has culled from every author

he has read, all the fine and all the bitter things they have said, and applied them to the prosecutor; and the whole course of his defence has been the most virulent attack upon his character—and should the defendant be convicted by your verdict, of which I can entertain no doubt, he has rendered himself a just subject for condign punishment. That the defendant wrote the letter is admitted—that it is grossly libellous is equally clear—and that it is false you must now be entirely convinced. If this should be your conviction you must necessarily pronounce the defendant guilty. But if you should doubt either that he published the letter, or its libellous nature, or if you should be of opinion that he has proved Mr. Greenwood to be a liar, a scoundrel, or a slanderer, then, in God's name acquit him."

The learned, cast-iron-faced judge then charged the jury. He confessed he might have been wrong in admitting evidence of truth, but as the counsel had consented he had not opposed; the words were libellous beyond all doubt, and "in an indictment for libel the party could not, in law, be allowed to plead in his justification the truth of what he had alleged;" if such were not the law every individual might have his foibles, his follies, or even his crimes, published in every newspaper in the kingdom for the purpose of bringing him into disgrace; there could be no doubt as to the libel, and *no doubt as to the malicious intent*; if the defendant was found guilty he would have an opportunity to urge, in another place, a mitigation of punishment.

Mr. Taylor.—My lord, I request that the letters and papers which have been given in evidence may be handed to the jury.

Baron Wood (angrily).—No I won't; I shall allow of no such thing.

A few hurried words passed in the jury-box. It was seen that there was not to be an agreement in court. The foreman, honest, firm, conscientious John Rylands, took

his great coat from the front of the bar where he had hung it, and threw it over his arm with an energy and determination of air which led Mr. Childs to remark to Taylor:—"That man will acquit you." In a letter to me Childs says:—"I have often desired since to see again that sedate, earnest, strong, thoughtful-looking man, but after the events of that day I have never had the opportunity, yet I have never forgotten him." The jury retired.

Mr. Taylor, his sister, and his friends sat in court listening to the next case, turning their heads at every distant sound to see if the jury were coming back, but the day wore heavily on without any sign, and at length the court broke up. Several of us afterwards went to the foot of the stair, which led to the room where the jury were confined. There sat at the door, a man who was charged to keep it sacred from the approach of any persons whatever. He said he had heard loud words for several hours, at intervals, but for a long while past they had been very quiet. We returned to our inn, under the conviction that the longer the jury remained out, the better the case stood, and from time to time kept returning to watch, and to learn if any sound had been heard from the mysterious room,—but no—the men might be dead, for aught we could learn or hear.

Thus we paced the streets of Lancaster, hour after hour. It was a wild, howling night, with continued blasts and hail storms. Sometimes we stood and watched the window of the tower which contained the jury, and contemplated their condition on such a wintry day and night as that had been, confined and kept so many hours without food, or drink, or tobacco, "or coal, or candle-light." Thus at intervals of half an hour, an hour, and so on, more or less, we sauntered backwards and forwards, hearing the Lancaster clocks strike hour after hour. A few of our number determined to go, yet once again, to have a few words with the keeper of the door, with whom by this time, from their

numerous visits to him, they seemed to have become familiar acquaintance. They went this time, rather with a view to bid the man good night, or have a few more last words, than with any expectation that there would be any move or stir before morning, when, suddenly, while they were talking with the door-keeper, there was a most unearthly yell: "Open the door!"—then a confused bustle,—then their familiar with whom they had been speaking, became authoritative. "O, get away gentlemen, the jury are agreed," said he; and sure enough it was the jury—"agreed." By the dim light which was reflected upon them when the door opened, and as they descended from their dark chamber, they formed the oddest spectacle, and made the qucerest picture imaginable. It was obvious that all the arts they could devise to keep themselves warm had been tried; two had handkerchiefs tied on their heads, and all made a most piteous appearance. The bailiff who had charge of them now arranged them two abreast, and marched them off towards the judges' lodging, whither at the close of the court, it had been decided they should proceed to deliver their verdict, whenever they came to an agreement. The judges were then lodged at a considerable distance from the courts, and our friends and Taylor kept close to the jury, who were escorted, through the up and down, narrow, dark streets of Lancaster, with one poor lantern before them. The days of gas—there—were not yet. Two of the jury—elderly men—conversed together as they staggered along. One was overheard saying:—"This is a dreadful business, sir,—I shall never get over it; I am quite perished." "I hope," said he, next him, "they won't keep us long at the judges' house, and then we must get back as quick as we can, and get some hot brandy, sir." Our friends reached the door, and there was a little jostling, but instantly came an officer from the inside, who begged that all might be conducted as quietly as possible, and requested the jury to follow him. Taylor

and his friends stuck to the jury, went up one flight of broad stairs, then another, where there was a stand still, on a large open landing, the size of the vestibule below. Here the door was gently opened, and into a moderate sized bed-room, up two stairs, went the jury, attended by their companions, who represented the public and shire, where, with undrawn curtains, bolt upright, in his night cap and bed clothing, sat Baron Wood. Think of the spectacle!

"Silence, gentlemen," said the officer.

"Gentlemen of the jury, answer to your names." They answered.

"Gentlemen of the jury, are you agreed in your verdict?"

"We are," said the foreman, firmly, in a tone which indicated that he had achieved a victory.

"How say you gentlemen, is John Edward Taylor guilty or not guilty?"

In the dimness of the light of that room—for there was but a small chamber lamp—and the oddness of the scene passing before the eyes, it would be difficult for any person to convey to another the sensation of that moment which intervened between the question and answer. "It reminded me on the instant," said one of our friends, "of that period of deepest anxiety which all must personally feel at some time or other—'that drop of time'—which is sufficient to embrace in it 'a life of pain, an age of crime.' " But when John Rylands, of Warrington, pronounced with a triumphant emphasis, "He is *not* guilty," there arose a burst of exultation, notwithstanding the privacy of the place, which made the whole house ring. I am not aware that the judge uttered a sentence, but the officer begged imploringly for silence, and all parties, both spectators and jury, got as quick as possible into the street, when the echoes of the old town told, tolerably loud and frequent, the fact that the verdict was—" *He is not guilty.* "

"The jurors were principally of the old school of loyalists, and had been disposed to return an immediate verdict of

"guilty," but John Rylands calmly urged his objections, which were listened to very impatiently. "Well, gentlemen," said the sturdy foreman, after long discussion, "if you will insist upon that verdict, I will go to sleep and consider about it in the morning; there is my bed," throwing his coat into one corner of the room, and then lying down upon it. His example was followed by others, apparently as stern in maintaining their own purpose. But some did not take it so comfortably; they had, for years past, been accustomed to their pipes and as many glasses of strong ale by the inn fireside as they liked, and to be thus unexpectedly deprived of those enjoyments, and to find themselves supperless in an empty room without fire or candle or bed to lie upon, was beyond endurance. One of them was really ill, and bemoaned the hardships of his case in piteous accents: "Are you going to keep me here all night when I am so ill?" "Here are you," said the foreman, "whining about the hardship of being shut up for one night, and yet you would put it in the power of the court to confine a man eighteen months for having spoken the truth." The appeal was successful. There were now two for a verdict of "not guilty." The others remaining obstinate, John Rylands stretched himself in his corner and lay in sober thoughtfulness, munching his crust quietly to conceal his possession of it from those with whom he was locked up, until each of them, one after another, yielded to their cravings for personal comfort as of much greater importance than the vindication of their loyalty, and then they emerged from their total darkness into dim light.

Some of the gentlemen who accompanied Taylor had gone home at the close of the day. Taylor, Atkinson, and Childs agreed to remain till after the opening of the court in the morning, for the purpose of showing the acquitted to the judge and the bar. He had not been long in the court when "*Lawyer Scarlett*," as Cobbett used to call him, took

the opportunity to pass by him and to say, "You had a friend on the jury yesterday, Mr. Taylor;" to which Taylor replied, readily and well, "No, Mr. Scarlett, the jury felt that you treated me unfairly." In his conduct on that trial Scarlett showed more of the heartless man than of the reformer which he pretended to be at that time,—more of the baseness which became fully developed in his character when, after the passing of the reform bill, and fourteen years had passed, he introduced into Norwich a flood of iniquity and corruption which proved him to belong to the class who, in all ages, have regarded the end to be accomplished as justifying the means, however base the means required for its accomplishment may be.

Taylor, Atkinson, and Childs, left Lancaster at about twelve o'clock, and on their way to Manchester Mr. Childs said to Taylor, "It is now plain you have the elements of public work in you; why don't you set up a newspaper?" and thereupon gave him what of practical detail he could relative to such a speculation.

The ability displayed by Mr. Taylor on his trial, the boldness with which he denounced the fictions of law in cases of libel, and, more than all, his success when pitted against the most successful barrister on the circuit, seem to have determined him to leave mereantile pursuits, for which he had not many qualifications. He spoke of eating his terms at one of the inns of court; but at the age of twenty-seven, without previous legal study, he felt that he had been rather too late to adopt a profession which would require five years of probation. In two years more his reform friends established him in the *Manchester Guardian*, and he drew, from a concurrence of most fortunate circumstances, one of the most splendid prizes, regarded in a pecuniary point of view, ever drawn in the lottery of newspaper speculation—gaining by boldness while the enthusiasm of youth remained, and retaining by cautiousness when more mature years taught prudence and circumspection.

CHAPTER X.

HENRY HUNT.—THE RADICAL AGITATION IN 1819.

WHEN the hand of coercion was removed, it was likely that the spirit of discontent should find public expression. The distress throughout 1817 and 1818 had been very great, and it became more intense in this vicinity when preparations began to be made for the resumption of cash payments by the bank. The scarcity and dearness of money greatly lessened the value of all manufactured products, and the working classes, as usual, were the first to feel the effects of the deep commercial depression. They were taught to look upon misgovernment as the cause of their misery, and they attributed that misgovernment to the grossly defective state of the representation. They saw Manchester, Salford, Bolton, Blackburn, Rochdale, Bury, Ashton-under-Lyne, Oldham, and Stockport without members, whilst Old Sarum—a mound of earth without inhabitants—and a host of villages, decayed and rotten, each sent two. It was not to be wondered at that they complained,—not to be wondered at that they crowded round those who appealed to their sympathies, gave articulate utterance to their complaints, and offered to aid them in obtaining redress of their grievances.

A fresh campaign was vigorously commenced with the commencement of the year 1819. Henry Hunt had come forward as a champion of the people's rights, and he was well fitted to appeal with effect to the excited passions of the multitude. His portrait is thus drawn by Samuel Bamford, on the occasion of the radical laureate's first visit to London, in an earlier stage of the agitation: "He was gentlemanly in his manner and attire; six feet and better

in height, and extremely well formed. He was dressed in a blue lapelled coat, light waistcoat and kerseys, and topped boots; his leg and foot were about the firmest and neatest I ever saw. He wore his own hair; it was in moderate quantity, and a little grey. His features were regular, and there was a kind of youthful blandness about them which, in amicable discussion, gave his face a most agreeable expression. His lips were delicately thin, and receding; but there was a dumb utterance about them which, in all the portraits I have seen of him, was never truly copied. His eyes were blue, or light grey—not very clear, nor quick, but rather heavy, except—as I afterwards had opportunities for observing—when he was excited in speaking, at which times they seemed to distend and protrude; and if he worked himself furious, as he sometimes would, they became blood-streaked, and almost started from their sockets.”

On the 25th of January Hunt made a public entry into Manchester from Stockport, accompanied by the indomitable John Knight; Ogden, characterized by Canning as the “revered and ruptured;” Mark Wardle, the printer of the *Manchester Observer*, a paper which was established as the organ of radicalism; and a number of others. The procession boasted of many gay flags, a kind of display which Hunt exceedingly liked. The meeting was very numerous and very peaceable, and there was applause enough to satisfy even Hunt; but his appetite grew with what it fed upon, and he must needs appear at the theatre, to have his share of the plaudits usually dealt out there. He went on the following Friday night, accompanied by a number of friends, some of whom, earnest reformers, went reluctantly, thinking that men who were working for national regeneration should not waste their time in idle amusements. He was received with “great applause” by a portion of the audience, and that excited the ire of another portion. “God save the King” was called for, to show him the loyalty of Manchester,

and, on the pretence that he did not show the usual marks of respect for the national anthem, he was rudely assailed by some military officers and some hot-headed residents, and at length forcibly expelled from the house. Smarting under this infliction, which was more disgraceful to his assailants than to himself, he sent for Bamford, and told him that he meant to go to the theatre another night, and that his attendance and that of ten or a dozen "stout fellows," in the pit and at the Fountain-street entrance, would be acceptable. A party of ten was accordingly formed and marched into Manchester. "It consisted of myself," says Bamford, "and nine picked men of my acquaintance from Middleton. Our business was to attend the play, to protect Mr. Hunt, if requisite, and to retaliate with punishment any insult that might be offered to him or any of his friends." They were all armed with sticks; "some carried blackthorn, some hazel, and others again had taken a fancy to that portable and effective cudgel, the green English holly." Here was Hunt going to court insult, and poor, simple Bamford and his nine picked men, and Irishmen with shillelahs under their long coats, to protect or retaliate! The street was filled, but the door was not opened, and the crowd began to be impatient. At length a messenger arrived from Mr. Ward, the manager, to announce that there would be no play. Bamford demanded to see Ward, and was admitted. An old acquaintance advanced to meet him:—

“‘Bamford! wot the d—— art thou doing here?’ ‘Hallo, friend Nadin; is that you?’ was my reply. It was Mr. Nadin, the deputy constable, who spoke. ‘Me?—aye, it’s me; but wot the d——l dus theaw want i’th’ teawn at this time o’th’ neet?’ I’m come to th’ play, th’ same as yo’ ar’, I suppose. But I want neaw to see Mr. Ward, th’ manager.’ Several persons spoke, and I think they said he was in conversation with the head constable. ‘Wot mun theaw want to see a play for?’ said Mr. Nadin.’ ‘Oh! I’m rather curious to see one; I understand it’s to be a good un to-neet.’ ‘I kno’ thee of owd’ I’ve seen thee afore at Middleton.’ Theaw may

go wom; theaw'll see no play here.' 'I'll see one iv there is ony to be seen, or I'll ston at yon dur till twelve o'clock: that yo' may depend on, Jozy.' 'Who ar' yon gang 'at theaw has wi' the'?' he said. 'Oh! they 're a set o' lads fro' different heawsces obewat; they'n tell yo' if yo'n ax' 'm.' 'Well, they'd better pack off, an' thee wi' 'em, for by —, if there's any damago done, I'll look afther yo'. Theaw may tell 'em, they'n ha' no play to-neet.' 'Then nobody will,' said I, as I went out, and shut the door after me. I had scarcely got to my former station, when a coach drove into the street, and on its being ascertained that it contained Hunt, Thomas Chapman, and other friends, a loud huzza burst from the dense multitude, mingled with a few hisses; but the minority were quickly silenced. Hunt then mounted the box, and addressing the people, stated that the manager had written to him, saying there would not be any performance that night, and requesting (I think) that he would come up and try to get the people to disperse, and go home. He next entered on some general topics, and with singular bad taste, to say the least of it (for his impetuosity over-ran his judgment), he said, 'the authorities only wanted a pretext to let the bloody butchers of Waterloo loose upon the people;' and concluded by advising them to retire to their homes peaceably. We then gave three cheers; the carriage disappeared, and the street was soon deserted. Our party went to the Robin Hood, where we were joined by a score or two others, and we set to, and caroused until midnight, and then returned home."

Hunt's folly in going to court insult was more than matched by the impudence and insolence of some of the "respectable" inhabitants. A party of coarse ruffians, in the garb of gentlemen, forced themselves into his private room in the Spread Eagle, and signalized their bravery by offering battle to a few friends who had met to spend a quiet evening with him. "They were a set of lucky dogs," says Bamford. "Had they been taken by us in the fact, there would have been a sore and pitiable account of them in the morning." They were not, however, taken in the fact. Bamford and his picked men were off to the Robin Hood, where they were joined by a score or two of others, and these world-regenerators "set to and caroused till midnight, and then returned home." There was a levity

and flippancy about all this that gives us, as we look back upon it now, little proof that the actors had any deep feeling of the responsibility they were incurring as the advocates of great national rights; but they also furnish an argument that these men, thus idly occupying themselves, were very far from being dangerous revolutionists.

At the spring assizes, at Chester, Baguley and some others were tried, found guilty, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment, for seditious harangues at Stockport. The evidence against some of them was strong enough, if the witnesses were to be believed; but if anything was deficient in proof as to the harangues of each individual prisoner, the law of conspiracy, as defined by judges, supplied any short-coming. They had "breathed together," and therefore *each* was made responsible for *all* that had been uttered. There was another "conspiracy" at a subsequent meeting in Stockport, in which Sir C. Wolseley, an honest, but not a very wise man; Fitton, both honest and shrewd; indomitable old John Knight, the "revered and ruptured" Ogden, and Harrison, took part. Sir Charles and Harrison were afterwards tried for sedition, found guilty of having breathed together, and imprisoned.

On the 21st of June, 1819, another meeting was held on St. Peter's Field, Manchester, and resolutions were passed appointing district delegates for a general national union to reform the government. Meetings took place about the same time at Oldham, Bolton, Royton, Bury, Heywood, Stockport, Ashton-under-Lyne, Failsworth, Gee Cross, Lees, Middleton, Rochdale, Todmorden, Barnsley, Holmfirth, Leeds, and other towns, all unrepresented in parliament; and, says Mr. Wheeler, "with a view to embarrass the government, a pledge was generally entered into by the people attending the several places of rendezvous to abstain from the use of any exciseable article not absolutely necessary to support existence." Hunt, to supply the place of coffee, recommended his own roasted

corn, which was found to be a very unpalatable substitute ; and sloe leaves did not produce so pleasant a beverage as tea. The main stress was laid on abstinence from spirits and ale ; and the good old loyalists were shocked at the iniquity of soberness from such a motive. A placard, signed, " Bob Short," was stuck on all the walls, and distributed from house to house, denouncing all as enemies to the working people who would persuade them to renounce the use of the good old English drinks, and urging the readers to return to their good old drunken habits, to prove their attachment to king, and church, and constitution, endangered by this conspiracy to promote sobriety. The expense of this precious production, amounting to some eighty pounds, was defrayed from the *church-rates* ! The item for " printing " was objected to at the parish table, on the ground that the particulars were not given, but it was passed notwithstanding. An application to the Court of King's Bench was made, and a *mandamus* was issued that the particulars should be laid before the parish, in vestry assembled, on which the churchwardens, ashamed, not of issuing, but in being found out in issuing, persuasives to drunkenness, withdrew the item entirely from their accounts, which were then passed. This attempt to pay out of *church-rates*, for an earnest inculcation of the duty of drunkenness, created a desire to inquire more strictly into the churchwarden's expenditure ; and it was found, at a subsequent vestry meeting, that three bottles of wine, per man, besides brandy, had been consumed at their annual dinner, and I remarked, on the use of brandy in addition to this intolerable quantity of sack, that probably the three churchwardens had remained, after their company had left them, to sing :—

" Here are we met three merry boys,
Three merry boys I trow are we."

Meeting one of the churchwardens, a few days afterwards he asked—" How did you know that we sang ' Willie brew'd a peek o' malt ! ' "

"It was desirable," says Mr. Wheeler, "to stop these combined movements of the disaffected." The combined movements were, frequently public meetings, "training," and abstinence from intoxicating liquors; as for abstinence from coffee, all Hunt's popularity could not make a decoction from his roasted corn go down. For an account of the reasons for training I must borrow again from Bamford:—

"These drillings were also to our sedentary weavers and spinners periods of healthful exercise and enjoyment. Our drill masters were generally old soldiers of the line, of the militia, or local militia regiments; they put the lads through their facings in quick time, and soon learned them to march with a steadiness and regularity which would not have disgraced a regiment on parade. When dusk came, and we could no longer see to work, we jumped from our looms, and rushed to the sweet cool air of the fields, or the waste lands, or the green lane sides. We mustered, we fell into rank, we faced, marched, halted, faced about, counter-marched, halted again, dressed, and wheeled, in quick succession, and without confusion; or, in the grey of a fine Sunday morn, we would saunter through the mists, fragrant with the night odour of flowers, and of new hay, and ascending the Tandle Hills, salute the broad sun as he climbed from the high moors of Saddleworth. * * * There were not any arms—no use for any—no pretence for any; nor would they have been permitted. Some of the elderly men, the old soldiers, or those who came to watch, might bring a walking staff, or a young fellow might pull a stake from a hedge, in going to drill or in returning home; but, assuredly, we had nothing like arms about us. There were no armed meetings—there were no midnight meetings. Why should we seek to conceal what we had no hesitation in performing in broad day? There was not anything of the sort. No arming—no concealing meetings. Such as I have described were all our drillings, about which so much was afterwards said. We obtained by them all we sought, or thought of—an expertness and order whilst moving in bodies; and there was no hyperbole in the statement which a magistrate afterwards made on oath, that 'the party with the blue and green banners came upon the field in beautiful order!' adding, I think, that 'not until then did I become alarmed!'"

These trainings, harmless as Bamford believed them to be, excited great alarm, and scouts were sent out to see to what extent they were carried, and who were engaged in

them, in order that if any of those persons afterwards took part in any public meeting, a connection might be proved to exist between the public demonstration and the partially concealed training. This chain of connection was established very cleverly. An amateur spy, of the name of Murray, went, with three others, and witnessed the drilling on White Moss. The radicals took an effectual mode of fixing the circumstances in his memory. They gave him and his companions a sound drubbing. At the trial of Hunt and others at York, the drilling was proved, the drubbing was proved, and it was also proved that a part of the procession, headed by Hunt when he entered Manchester, on the 16th of August, stopped and hooted opposite Murray's shop. Ergo, in law logic, the White Moss drillers formed a part of St. Peter's Field meeting; and, ergo, that last meeting was an illegal meeting because the first was!

Were there no gentlemen acquainted with the real condition and opinions of the working classes in the neighbourhood upon the list of magistrates, to discourage the employment of spies, and to repress the violence contemplated under the pretence of alarm? Dr. W. Cooke Taylor, in his "Life and Times of Sir Robert Peel," says:—"In 1819, Manchester was not incorporated; in the eye of the law it was a village, and, as such, subject to the jurisdiction of the county magistrates. A rule had been established by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, that no manufacturer should receive the commission of the peace; consequently, the magistrates were either landowners or clergymen. The Lancashire squires viewed the manufacturing population with a jealousy which may have been unreasonable, but certainly was not unnatural; they saw persons suddenly becoming their rivals in wealth and influence by a course of industry and economy, which hereditary prejudices led them to despise; and they feared that these new men would displace the ancient families. The clergy were identified in feeling with the landlords,

by habit, education, and social intercourse; for a very large proportion of the manufacturers belonged to dissenting sects. With such feelings they allowed the meeting of the 16th of August to assemble, hoping, by a *coup d'état*, to strike terror into the reformers of Manchester, and, perhaps, disposed to show their contempt for spinners and weavers by arresting the leader in the midst of the assembly.

The government was alarmed at the frequency of the reform meetings, at the vast numbers who thus congregated, and at the language uttered. On July 1st, Lord Sidmouth issued circular letters to the lords lieutenant of the disturbed counties, recommending prompt and effectual means for the preservation of the public tranquillity, and that the yeomanry should hold themselves in readiness. On the following day a meeting was held at Newhall-hill, Birmingham, where Sir Charles Wolseley was nominated "legislatorial attorney and representative" for that town. On the 30th of the month a proclamation was issued by the Prince Regent against military training, seditious meetings and writings, and the election of legislatorial attorneys. The local authorities supplied the government with the assertions of the existence of a dangerous spirit, and earnestly besought the means of putting it down. On the 1st of July, J. Sylvester, R. Wright, W. Marriott, C. W. Ethelston, and J. Norris, magistrates, wrote to Lord Sidmouth from the Manchester New Bailey Court House, stating that, urged on by the harangues of a few desperate demagogues, they anticipated "a general rising;" that as the law stood, *they had no power to prevent these meetings*; and that they were "unarmed." The magistrates assembled at the Knutsford quarter sessions, four of them clergymen, passed resolutions declaratory of evil designs on the part of the people, and recommending all friends of king and constitution to "rally round the standard of legal authority, and by the manifestation of their principles, destroy the

baneful effects of blasphemy and seditious doctrines, reclaim the deluded, give confidence to the loyal, and maintain inviolate our rights, our liberties, and our laws." A meeting at the Manchester police office, held July 16th, of the "Committee to Strengthen the Civil power," John Bradshaw, Esq., in the chair, petitioned government to supply them with arms and accoutrements for one thousand men. On the 20th of July, the grand jury, addressing the Manchester magistrates, recommended the immediate establishment of ARMED ASSOCIATIONS for the purpose of strengthening and supporting the civil power. This document was signed by

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| Thomas Peel, | John Touchet, | John Hardman, |
| James Hay, | Arthur Clegg, | W. Hutchinson, |
| William Tetlow, | J. H. Heron, | William Lomas, |
| Chrstr. Parker, | T. Worthington, | Thomas Helsby, |
| Thos. Entwistle, | J. S. Barton, | John Tetlow, |
| William Hatton, | William Hill, | Robert Hay. |

The great object was that, as there was no law to prevent peaceably held meetings, the meetings should be connected with some illegal act elsewhere. On the 5th of August, Mr. Norris, the Manchester stipendiary magistrate, writes Lord Sidmouth, stating that a meeting convened for the 9th would not be held. This, he says, would be a great disappointment to the neighbouring towns, which had provided a number of flags and caps of liberty for the occasion. He adds :—"The drilling parties increase very extensively, and unless some mode be devised of putting this system down, it promised *to become a most formidable engine of rebellion.*" In the doubt whether the open meetings could be connected with the drillings, it was thought very desirable that there should be some declarations of alarm for personal safety if those meetings were held, and, accordingly, we have, on the 7th of August, the informations of S. N., S. E., D. N., and D. R. all of Bury—the full names are not given—before Ralph

Fletcher, of Bolton, a magistrate, formerly notorious for the employment of spies. The informants say: "We all upon our oath say, that in various parts of the neighbourhood of Bury aforesaid, there are nightly assemblies of great numbers of men, who meet together to learn and practise military training, which *these informants verily believe* to be intended to qualify them for hostile purposes against the government of the country, and against the peace of our lord the king, his crown and dignity, and to the disturbance of them, *these informants*, who hereby assert their *fears for their personal safety*; and therefore they, *these informants*, pray that these men so training in large bodies, to the terror of his majesty's subjects, may be apprehended and committed to find sureties to keep the peace." Further informations, to the same effect, are sworn on the 9th of August, before Ralph Fletcher and James Watkins, whose names will be recollected in connection with the West Houghton affair, in 1812. Ralph Fletcher writes, on the 10th of August, to Lord Sidmouth, representing that the public meetings are so demoralizing and so terrifying to his majesty's loyal subjects, that, "*under whatever pretext they may be called,*" they ought to be suppressed. On the 12th of August Mr. Norris, whose legal knowledge was about co-extensive with the weakness of his judgment, again writes Lord Sidmouth, and says, in reference to the drillings: "They affect to say that it is for the purpose of appearing at Manchester in better order, &c., on Monday next; but military discipline was not requisite for this purpose, and a more alarming object is so palpable that it is impossible not to feel a moral conviction that insurrection and rebellion is their ulterior object." At the same time the Cheshire magistrates, assembled at Knutsford, send a memorial to Lord Sidmouth, asserting that thousands of young persons in schools were taught principles of a most dangerous tendency, and praying that such schools should be suppressed, and that "if the *existing laws* are not

suffieient for that purpose, *others should be framed for their prevention.*" The names of the persons thus memorializing were :—

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| Earl of Stamford, | Sir J. T. Stanley, | Peter Brooke, |
| Edwin Corbett, | Davies Davenport, | W. Egerton, |
| John Ford, | John Clegg, | Egerton Leigh, |
| Thomas Parker, | Edward Stracey, | E. V. Townsend, |
| Trafford Trafford, | T. W. Tatton, | R. Wilbraham, |
| John Brown, clerk. | J. T. Law, clerk, | J. H. Mallory, clerk. |

On the 13th of August, before the Rev. W. R. Hay, "Jonathan Andrew, of Manchester, maketh oath and saith that, on Thursday evening, the 12th inst., betwixt the hours of eight and nine o'clock, he saw exercising *on the new road* to Rochdale from twenty to twenty-five men, armed with staves, from four to five feet long, and apparently from three to three and a half inches round, *similar to a brush-stail*, but chiefly of *green wood*. He heard the word of command given (by a person separated from the rest), 'March,' 'Halt,' &c." Poor Jonathan! Drilling in the open public road with mop-stails of green wood must have had a formidable appearance indeed. Why did he not swear that he also was alarmed? With all these depositions as to drilling, and oaths of people that they were afraid for their personal safety, the magistrates were not sure that they had yet made all right. At midnight of the 15th of August they were yet in uncertainty as to their power of preventing the meeting to be held next day. Mr. Norris, in a letter to Lord Sidmouth, dated eleven o'clock, p.m., says that although the magistrates, as then advised, *did not then think of preventing the meeting*, they were alarmed, and were in a *state of painful uncertainty*. Can it be that while thus writing to Lord Sidmouth, officially, there was a private resolution, perhaps directed by him, to allow the meeting to assemble and to disperse it with the swords of the yeomanry, notoriously known to have been sharpened for the occasion? On the very evening on which Mr.

Norris wrote, Hunt had offered to surrender himself voluntarily. Did the magistrates, as Dr. Taylor supposes, rather seek the opportunity of striking terror into the multitude assembled by arresting their leader, no matter at what risk of bloodshed, before their eyes?

If, at eleven o'clock on the night of the 15th August, the magistrates did not think of preventing the meeting—did not think that the meeting could, legally, be prevented—the inhabitants could not but suppose that it would pass off peaceably, as other previous meetings had passed off; and, on going to sleep, probably not one in a hundred of them had the slightest apprehension that they would encounter any danger in attending it themselves and taking their wives and children with them. There was more fear throughout Manchester, on the night of the 15th August, that the next morning would be rainy, than that the peace would be broken by either the people or the magistracy.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SIXTEENTH OF AUGUST, 1819.

THE morning of the 16th of August came, and soon after nine o'clock the people began to assemble. From the windows of Mr. Baxter's house in Mosley-street, I saw the main body proceeding towards St. Peter's Field, and never saw a gayer spectacle. There were haggard-looking men certainly, but the majority were young persons, in their best Sunday's suits, and the light coloured dresses of the cheerful tidy-looking women relieved the effect of the dark fustians worn by the men. The "marching order," of which so much was said afterwards, was what we often see now in the processions of Sunday-school children and temperance societies. To our eyes the numerous flags seemed to have been brought to add to the picturesque effect of the pageant. Slowly and orderly the multitudes took their places round the hustings, which stood on a spot now included under the roof of the Free Trade Hall, near its south-east corner. Our company laughed at the fears of the magistrates, and the remark was, that if the men intended mischief they would not have brought their wives, their sisters, or their children with them. I passed round the outskirts of the meeting, and mingled with the groups that stood chatting there. I occasionally asked the women if they were not afraid to be there, and the usual laughing reply was—"What have we to be afraid of?" I saw Hunt arrive, and heard the shouts of the sixty thousand persons by whom he was enthusiastically welcomed, as the carriage in which he stood made its way through the dense crowd to the hustings. I proceeded to my dwelling-house in Salford, intending to return in about an hour or so to

witness in what manner so large a meeting would separate. I had not been at home more than a quarter of an hour when a wailing sound was heard from the main street, and, rushing out, I saw people running in the direction of Pendleton, their faces pale as death, and some with blood trickling down their cheeks. It was with difficulty I could get any one to stop and tell me what had happened. The unarmed multitude, men, women, and children, had been attacked with murderous results by the military.

The magistrates had resolved, at the last moment, that Hunt, and the friends who accompanied him to the hustings, should be apprehended in the face of the meeting. It was a great assemblage, and, no doubt, they thought the capture of the ringleaders in the presence of sixty thousand persons would produce a salutary effect. There was abundance of force at hand to render resistance hopeless. The number of special constables had been greatly increased, two hundred additional having been sworn in for the occasion; a portion were stationed round the hustings, and another formed a line of communication thence to the house in which the magistrates were assembled, a distance of about a hundred yards. Near to the field, ready the moment their services were required, were six troops of the 15th Hussars, a troop of horse artillery, with two guns, the greater part of the 31st regiment of infantry, some companies of the 88th regiment, the Cheshire yeomanry, of between three and four hundred men, and the Manchester yeomanry, of about forty, the latter hot-headed young men, who had volunteered into that service from their intense hatred of radicalism. With such a force at command, the warrant might have been executed without the slightest tumult. Had Nadin, the deputy constable, a man of more bluster than courage, been afraid to proceed along the line of constables, a few men from the regular army might have formed an additional line for his protection. No such intention was indicated; Hunt had addressed the dense multitude, now hushed into

deep silence, intently listening to the opening of his speech, when, suddenly, at a quick trot, past the corner of a wall which bounded Brown's cottage, appeared the Manchester yeomanry, and drew up in front of the house in which the magistrates were met. The crowd received them, as Bamford says, with a shout of good will—as the aggressors said, with a shout of defiance, when, as suddenly as they had appeared at the outskirts of the meeting, they drew their swords, waved them round their heads, and dashed into the crowd! Nadin had said he was afraid to serve the warrant, and this was the way it was to be served. As the yeomanry neared the hustings the inert resistance of those who could not move out of the way increased, and the troops were separated, each man striving to open out his own way, some with pale faces and firmly-closed eyes, striking with their sabres as if they were insane. At this time two squadrons of the hussars came upon the field. Sir W. Jolliffe, who, was a lieutenant in the regiment, says:—"It was then, for the first time, that I saw the Manchester yeomanry; they were scattered singly or in small groups, over the greater part of the field, literally hemmed up, and wedged into the mob, so that they were powerless either to make an impression or to escape; in fact they were in the power of those whom they were *designed to overawe*; and it required only a glance to discover their helpless position, and the necessity of our being brought to their rescue." The attack was then ordered. The hussars, in their turn, and with resistless force, dashed into the crowd. "People, *yeomen* and *constables*," says Sir W. Jolliffe, "in their confused attempts to escape, ran one over the other, so that, by the time we had arrived at the end of the field, the fugitives were literally piled up to a considerable elevation above the level of the field." The rescued yeomanry were not satisfied with a charge which had produced this frightful effect. Bamford says:—

"On the breaking of the crowd, the yeomanry wheeled; and

dashing wherever there was an opening, they followed, pressing and wounding. Many females appeared as the crowd opened; and striplings and mere youths were also found. Their cries were piteous and heart-rending; and would, one might have supposed, have disarmed any human resentment; but their appeals were vain. Women, white-vested maids, and tender youths, were indiscriminately sabred or trampled on; and we have reason for believing, that few were the instances in which that forbearance was vouchsafed which they so earnestly implored. In ten minutes from the commencement of the havoc, the field was an open and almost deserted space. The sun looked down through a sultry and motionless air; the curtains and blinds of the windows, within view, were all closed. A gentleman or two might occasionally be seen looking out from some houses of recent erection, near the door of which a group of persons (special constables) were collected, and apparently in conversation; others were assisting the wounded, or carrying off the dead. The hustings remained, with a few broken and hewed flag-staves erect, and a torn or gashed banner or two drooping, whilst over the whole field were strewed caps, bonnets, hats, shawls, and shoes, and other parts of male and female dress, trampled, torn, and bloody. The yeomanry had dismounted; some were easing their horses' girths, others adjusting their accoutrements, and some were wiping their sabres. Several mounds of human beings still remained where they had fallen, crushed down and smothered; some of these were still groaning; others, with staring eyes, were gasping for breath; and others would never breathe more. All were silent save those low sounds, and the occasional snorting and pawing of steeds. Persons might sometimes be noticed peeping from attics, and over the tall ridgings of houses, but they quickly withdrew, as if fearful of being observed, or unable to sustain the full gaze of a scene so hideous and abhorrent."

Hunt and his companions on the hustings had been taken into custody during the enactment of this frightful tragedy.

Sir W. Jolliffe says:—"The hussars generally drove the people forwards with the flats of their swords; but sometimes, as is almost invariably the case when men are placed in such situations, the edge was used both by the hussars and, as I have heard, by the yeomen, but of this latter part, I was not cognizant; and believing though I do that nine out of ten of the sabre wounds were caused

by the hussars, I must still consider that it redounds to the humane forbearance of the men of the 15th that more wounds were not received, when the vast numbers are taken into consideration with whom they were brought into hostile collision." Collision is not exactly the term to describe an action where the striking was all on one side. Every blow was an unnecessary one, for no resistance was ever attempted. Subsequent inquiry proved that the yeomanry had a larger share in the infliction of sabre wounds than Sir W. Jolliffe attributes to them, and to them alone the dishonour attaches of having wounded several peaceable persons on the adjacent streets after the dispersion of the meeting.

It was known that some of the reporters who were on the hustings, amongst them Mr. Tyas, of the *London Times*, when the sanguinary attack was made upon the assembled multitude, had been taken into custody, and it was feared that no relation of the events would reach London, except what might be sent by directions of the magistracy, and coloured to justify their conduct. Mr. John Edward Taylor undertook to write to one London paper that evening, and I to another. Our narratives appeared in print on the following day, and bearing greater internal evidence of truth, they received credence in preference to the accounts sent to government and the government press, and raised a strong feeling of indignation, which was deepened in intensity, and spread to all parts of the kingdom, when the reporter of the *Times*, rescued from duress, corroborated all our statements, and added details of still deeper atrocity than those which we had described.

The Manchester magistrates, alarmed at the tone of public opinion in London, had a meeting, hastily convened, on Thursday, the 19th, at the police-office, adjourned thence to the Star Inn, where it might be safe from the possibility of intrusion on the part of any police commissioner, who might hold the opinion that a peaceable

assembly ought not to have been dispersed by the sword. Resolutions, as if adopted at a public meeting, were passed and published, thanking the magistrates and the soldiers. I have mentioned that, from the time of the "blanket meeting," reform principles had been making gradual progress amongst the middle classes, disgusted by the arbitrary and the tyrannical, though cowardly, proceedings of the Sidmouth administration. The dispersion of a legally-convened meeting aroused a general indignation, which proved that the old doctrine of non-resistance to arbitrary power was on the wane; and the smuggled passing of thanks, so dishonestly sent forth, occasioned an expression of public feeling and opinion, such as had never been manifested in Manchester before. The following DECLARATION and PROTEST against the Star-Inn resolutions was immediately issued:—

↓ "We, the undersigned, without individually approving of the manner in which the meeting held at St. Peter's, on Monday, the 16th of August, was constituted, hereby declare, that we are fully satisfied, by personal observation or undoubted information, that it was *perfectly peaceable*; that no seditious or intemperate harangues were made there; that the Riot Act, *if read at all*, was read *privately*, or *without the knowledge of a great body of the meeting*; and we feel it our bounden duty to protest against, and to express our utter disapprobation of, *the unexpected and unnecessary violence by which the assembly was dispersed*.

"We further declare that the meeting convened at the Police Office, on Thursday, the 19th of August, for the purpose of thanking the magistrates, municipal officers, soldiery, &c., was strictly and exclusively *private*; and in order that its privacy might be more completely ensured, was adjourned to the Star Inn. It is a matter of notoriety that no expression of dissent from the main object of the meeting was there permitted.

"We, therefore, deny that it had any claim to the title of a '*numerous and highly respectable meeting of the inhabitants of Manchester and Salford, and their neighbourhood*'; and we hereby invite those who have *presumed* so to style it, to join with us in giving to the inhabitants at large of Manchester and Salford, and their neighbourhood, a *public* opportunity of expressing their real opinions upon the subject."

In the course of two or three days this protest received four thousand eight hundred signatures, including those of a considerable portion of persons who, in ordinary parlance, would be spoken of as belonging to the "respectable classes." It may gratify sons and grandsons to see some of the names attached to this declaration, at a time when there was some danger incurred by the expression of any opinion adverse to the powers that were:—

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| T. B. W. Sanderson, | Thomas Steven, | Henry Moore, |
| Edward Baxter, | John Smedley, | Francis Jackson, |
| John Reeves, | J. S. Ormerod, | George Horrocks, |
| William Wright, | Richard Woodward, | William Johns, |
| Samuel Hobson, | William Tuer, | Samuel Bates, |
| John Hobson, | Peter Tuer, | Robert Askew, |
| Samuel Winks, | John Shuttleworth, | Joseph Anthony, |
| John Robinson, | Hcz. Wright, | Joseph Hawkes, |
| Richard Potter, | W. Norris Buckley, | Thomas Jones, |
| Henry Pope, | John Barlow, | William Ryley, |
| John Brooks, | John Ashton, | William Barlow, |
| Joseph Weight, | Jesse Gallemore, | Edmund Lord, |
| Joseph Manson, | William Shawcross, | Jeremiah Turner, |
| John Radeliffe, | John Braddock, | Samuel Pulein, |
| William Harvey, | William Cantrell, | John Grundy, |
| Thomas Johnston, | John Hayes, | Thomas Reed, |
| John Johnston, | John Atkinson, | John Gallemore, |
| Jonathan Lees, | William Sutcliffe, | Thos. Tipping, jun., |
| John Harrison, | James Kershaw, | Jeremiah Buckley, |
| Joseph Gallemore, | J. E. Taylor, | Daniel Lonsdale, |
| James Anderson, | J. B. Thompson, | Thomas Hopkins, |
| R. W. B. Sanderson, | John Fletcher, | Joseph Wood, |
| Benj. Holbrooke, | John Kenworthy, | George Woollan, |
| Isaac Lees, | F. R. Atkinson, | Richard Wilson, |
| John Swindells, | Archibald Prentice, | Thomas Kershaw, |
| Thomas Wilkins, | Benjamin Beddome, | Alexander Haliday, |
| James Oecleston, | Peter Coe, | Robert Wright, |
| Samuel Livesey, | George Johnston, | Joseph Woodward, |
| James Bates, | William Gadsby, | Charles Pollitt, |
| John Richardson, | Henry Grimshaw, | John Dewhurst, |
| William Wood, | John Mangnall, | John Johnson, |
| John Mitchell, M.D., | Stephen Bates, | John Blackshaw, |

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| William Barratt, | J. R. Taylor, | William Harrison, |
| Joseph Barratt, | John Foster, | Thomas Grundy, |
| Edmund Wilson, | Francis Wood, | William Spencer, |
| William Clarke, | William Swindells, | J. G. Robberds, |
| Edward Foulkes, | Thomas Oakden, | J. S. Grafton. |

By way of counteracting the effect of this energetic protest, on the 27th of August Lord Sidmouth communicated to the Manchester magistrates, and to Major Trafford, and the military serving under him, the thanks of the Prince Regent, "for their prompt, decisive, and efficient measures for the preservation of the public peace" on the 16th instant. This haste to thank the delinquents greatly added to the exacerbation of the public mind. On September 2nd a large meeting was held at Westminster, at which Sir Francis Burdett presided, and a remonstrance to the Regent was adopted, calling on him to order the prosecution of the Manchester magistrates by the law officers of the crown. Meetings were also held in the city of London, at Glasgow, York, Bristol, Liverpool, Norwich, Nottingham, and other large towns, to address the Regent on the same subject. Some petitioned for inquiry; others passed a strong censure on the Manchester authorities and the ministers who had advised the royal letter of thanks. It was as the breaking up of a great frost. The middle classes had appeared as if they were bound up in the icy chains of indifference to the demands of their humble fellow-countrymen for their fair share of representation; but the sudden outburst showed that whatever opinions they might hold, as to how far the elective franchise might safely be extended, they were not disposed quietly to witness death inflicted on men whose only crime had been, that they asked for universal suffrage, vote by ballot, annual parliaments, and the repeal of the corn law.

Meanwhile hundreds of persons wounded upon that fatal 16th of August were enduring dreadful sufferings. They were disabled from work; not daring to apply for parish

relief; not even daring to ask for surgical aid, lest, in the arbitrary spirit of the time, their acknowledgment that they had received their wounds on St. Peter's Field might send them to prison—perhaps to the scaffold. A subscription was entered into for their relief; a careful and rigid inquiry was made for many successive weeks, the committee meeting in my warehouse, then in Church-street; and thus we arrived at an approximation to the extent of death and calamity inflicted. The published statement of the committee, at the conclusion of that long and careful investigation, records the deaths that had occurred:—

John Ashton, Cowhill, Oldham; sabred.

John Ashworth, of the Bull's Head, Manchester; sabred and trampled on.

Thomas Buckley, Baretrees, Chadderton; sabred and stabbed.

William Dawson, Saddleworth; sabred, crushed, and killed on the spot.

— Fildes, Kennedy-street, Manchester, an infant; rode over by the cavalry.

John Lees, Oldham; sabred. A coroner's inquest held on the body, adjourned without a verdict.

Arthur O'Neill, Pigeon-street, Manchester; inwardly crushed.

Martha Partington, Eccles; thrown into a cellar and killed on the spot.

Joseph Whitworth, Hyde; shot.

James Crompton, Barton; trampled on by the cavalry.

Mary Heys, Oxford-street, Manchester; rode over by the cavalry.

The names of the wounded, their ages, their places of residence, the manner in which they received their hurts, and the amount of pecuniary relief which they received, are also given in the published report of the committee. Their number was FOUR HUNDRED AND TWENTY, and the deputation from London state, that at the time they made their report, there were still ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY CASES to be considered by the local committee, which continued its meetings till these cases were investigated and relief administered. The deputation, Messrs. Rayner and

Hall, report to the central committee that out of four hundred of the sufferers whom they visited and relieved, *one hundred and thirteen were females*, being the mothers, wives, sisters, and children of many of the persons who attended that memorable meeting; that out of those four hundred and twenty persons materially injured, *one hundred and forty received severe sabre cuts*, and fourteen of these were inflicted on females; and that a great number of the sufferers had declared, "that if their respective parish officers had then been acquainted with the injuries they had sustained by attending the Manchester meeting, they would have been deprived of aid when their sufferings more particularly demanded it." The deputation further remark, that "they could not observe but with surprise the very general fear and dislike that the sufferers manifested against applying for medical relief to the Manchester Infirmary, not from any apprehension that their wounds and injuries would have been neglected or unskillfully treated, but they themselves would have been huffed and insulted on account of their political principles." As to the condition of the sufferers, the deputation report: "As the visits of your deputation were made unexpectedly, and frequently at those hours when these poor people were preparing or partaking of their hard and scanty meals, they had therefore ample opportunities of observing that their sole subsistence was potatoes, with a small quantity of salt, measured out in inadequate quantities to each individual of the family. Here and there was to be seen a little fat or dripping mixed up with the potatoes; but in no instance among the weavers did your deputation see a morsel of animal food; and they ascertained, that in most families where there were children, the taste of meat was unknown from one year to another."

Eleven persons killed; six hundred wounded; sixty thousand carrying to their homes the recollections of that fatal day; poverty and misery in every cottage; deep

distress, attributable, not unjustly, to heavy taxation and a law prohibiting the importation of food. Was there no wild revenge for the injuries inflicted—no vengeance on the instruments of an iron-handed government—no retaliation with the dagger for the cruel and wanton assault by the sword? There was not. The population of Lancashire had faith in the just administration of the law. Its working men, rough in manner and rude in speech, but shrewd, intelligent, and possessing much of the generous qualities of the Anglo-Saxon race, would not stoop to cowardly assassination. They had faith in their principles and greater belief in moral than physical force. On the day after the fatal sixteenth of August, the consciences of the guilty conjured up armies of deeply-enraged men, marching on Manchester, and devoting it to destruction. Thirty thousand pikemen were said to be actually on their road from Oldham alone! In that paralysis of terror, anything might have been done. But the men of Lancashire would not seek reform through the horrors of a sanguinary revolution. The belief was strong amongst them that bloodshed had never added much to the amount of liberty; they had no faith that freedom could be snatched as a brand from the flames of civil war. There was no armed attack; no private exercise of wild revenge. Reverend W. R. Hay, who was rewarded with a living of £2,400 a year for his services in “putting down” the Reformers; Reverend W. C. Ethelston, whose reading of the Riot Act nobody ever heard; stipendiary magistrate James Norris, who sought from government a power beyond the existing law; Hugh Hornby Birley, who led the attack upon a defenceless multitude; Joseph Nadin, who harshly apprehended those who were to be harshly punished under judge-made law;—all these have gone to their graves, without an assault, without an insult.

The subscription was for a double purpose—to relieve the sufferings of those who, being wounded or bruised, had

been deprived of the means of obtaining bread—and to protect and defend the persons who had been arrested. At the date of the report, 14th of February, 1820, the sums distributed to the sufferers amounted to £1,206 13s. 8d.; there had been expended £1,077 6s. 9d. in law charges; and there was a balance on hand of £768 1s. 9d. towards the expenses to be incurred at the approaching assizes, and the relief of the persons whose cases had not yet been fully investigated. The amount of the subscription proved that a deep sympathy for the oppressed and injured reformers prevailed amongst the middle classes, an inference which Mr. Bamford has omitted to draw, though he has made grateful notice of acts of individual kindness to himself. It was a healthful sign of the times, which should not be passed over in silence; for sympathy with reformers gave the promise of co-operation in the work of reform; and from this period may be dated a marked and favourable change in the current of public opinion.

Amongst the recipients of pecuniary aid were the persons who were imprisoned along with Mr. Hunt, who each had ten pounds. They were: Mr. Joseph Johnson, brushmaker, of No. 17, Shudehill, Manchester, the host of Hunt; indomitable old John Knight; Mr. Moorhouse, a coach proprietor, of Stockport; Mr. Saxton, the printer of the *Manchester Observer*; Samuel Bamford, of Middleton, the poet of radicalism; Healey, of Lees, near Oldham, commonly called Doctor Healey; Jones, Swift, and Wilde; and Mrs. Gaunt and Mrs. Hargreaves. Five persons against whom bills had been found for having been on the field on the 16th of August, and who had been confined five months for want of bail, received amongst them £28 10s. Twenty-nine persons, imprisoned for various offences, but against whom no bills were found, received amongst them £47. The following are a few extracts from the report, as a specimen of the various cases in which relief was given:—Margaret Booth, dreadfully crushed in

the crowd, disabled nine weeks, still (February, 1820) unwell, £3. James Beswick, severe sabre cut on his elbow, and trampled on by the crowd, disabled seven weeks: he had held up his arm to save his head, £2. William Butterworth, of Stake Hill, near Middleton, a desperate cut on the right arm, just below the shoulder, still disabled, £4 5s. Peter Blair, of Eeclcs, weaver, a severe sabre cut on his right shoulder, knocked down and bruised, £2. Thomas Billington, of Chapel-street, Ardwick, severe sabre cut on the top of the head, which went to the skull, and both arms bruised; he was repeatedly chased round the yard of the Friends' meeting-house, and received this cut on going out of the gate, £1 12s. Thomas Blinstone, aged 74 years, Back Turner-street, both arms broken, and much bruised in the body (disabled for life), assisted to remove to his parish, £2. I need not multiply instances, but I may add that amongst the other wounded were—a man aged 61, four 60, two 64, one 67, one 65, two men 50, a man 70, a woman 55, one 63, three men 63, a man 76, one 69, a woman 64, one 67, one 74, a man 75, a man 66, one 61, a woman 71, a man 62 (disabled for life), a woman 70, one 66, one 79, a man 74, one 75, a woman 64, and so on. Poor old Thomas Blinstone was looking on at the outside of the crowd when the yeomanry, turning round the wall, rode over him. I recollect him standing in my counting-house, with his two arms splintered up, and telling his case to the relief committee. At the conclusion he said, “and what is wur than aw, mesters, they’n broken my spectacles, and aw’ve ne’er yet been able to get a pair that suits me.”

CHAPTER XII.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND SUBSEQUENT TRIALS.

AMONGST the subscribers to the fund for the relief of the indigent sufferers on the 16th of August, 1819, was the Duke of Hamilton, lord lieutenant of the county of Lanark. A snow storm in January, 1820, which, for a time, levelled all distinctions of rank, brought the premier peer of Scotland and myself together at Berwick-on-Tweed. A few days before, one of the London ministerial newspapers had published a most abusive attack upon him, in which it was asserted that the money, instead of being distributed to mitigate the sufferings of those who had been wounded on that occasion, was given to excite further disaffection to the government. The duke was glad to hear, on the authority of one of the Manchester committee, a native of Lanarkshire, whose family was known by him, that substantial relief had been given where it was much needed, and he listened with deep attention to my narrative of the events of that fatal day. He said that, after the forcible dispersion of the meeting, he had been much afraid that the irritation occasioned would give rise to some tumult in his own county, and that he had written to Lord Sidmouth, representing the danger of adding to the existing irritation, calling his attention to the extreme distress that was endured in his neighbourhood—a distress that was more likely to increase than diminish—and suggesting that, in any measure to repress tumult, great care should be taken to discriminate between those who were urged by misery and those who intended to excite to mischief. On his saying that the concession of some reform would be more likely to tranquillize the country than coercion, I ventured to ask how

far he would extend the suffrage. He said he would give a vote to all who paid direct taxes. I acknowledged that this would be a very important movement in advance, but that it was liable to the objection that a great part of the revenue of the country was raised by indirect taxation. "Would you," I asked, "tax the necessities of life—the poor man's bread for instance—and allow him no vote?" "Sir," he said, "that is not legitimate taxation—it is extortion, which ought not for a moment to be permitted." "Well, my lord," I replied, there certainly would be less discontent in the country, if all who are excluded from the right of voting were exempted from the payment of taxes."

The duke expressed a desire to know how the whigs were estimated amongst the active-minded men of the manufacturing districts. I said that there had been a great disposition to rely upon them as the friends of progression, but that their reluctance to come out in favour of a bold amendment of the representative system, had greatly diminished the confidence of the people in their professions of regard for popular rights, and that the degree of confidence which remained would diminish till none was left, unless some forward movement was made. The duke said that the whigs were disposed to move onwards, but that they wished to carry the Grenvilles with them. "You had better leave them behind you than wait for their advance," I said; "they are nothing as a party; they hold you back when you should advance, and thus deprive you of the public confidence. Throw them overboard at once; come forward with a proposal for the destruction of the small rotten boroughs,—for the transference of seats to the large and important boroughs,—for shortening the duration of parliaments,—and for extending the suffrage so as to include the intelligence of the country,—for any honest measure which shall give the promise of more in due time, and I am confident that the whole community will be with you, as one man, and with a demonstration of power that will

compel both tories and Grenvillites to yield all that is demanded." It was not until eleven years after this conversation that the whigs did make the move; they were, as I had predicted, nobly and generously supported by the country; and through that support they achieved a victory which promised other victories, if they would use the means. It would seem now as if there still remained a Grenville party to hold them back. The finality of the reform bill was declared; and from 1832 to 1850, every attempt to improve its provisions has been resisted as strenuously as the borough-mongers resisted the destruction of their strongholds; and we have only last year been relieved from that tax on bread which the Duke of Hamilton declared, twenty-nine years before, to be an extortion which ought not for a moment to be permitted.

One object of the public subscription was to obtain a decision as to the legal character of the proceedings on the 16th of August. A man named John Lees had died in consequence of sabre cuts and other injuries received that day, and an inquest on his body was opened at Oldham on the 25th of September. Much delay occurred in the commencement of this inquiry by the absence of the coroner, Mr. Ferrand, from his duty, and the refusal of others to act in his stead; and it was afterwards prolonged to an extent unexampled, partly by the number of witnesses brought forward, and partly by the frequent adjournments, ultimately from Oldham to Manchester, which the coroner interposed. It was the aim of the solicitor, Mr. Harmer, afterwards alderman of the city of London, who conducted the examination on the part of the next of kin of the deceased, to prove the peaceful character of the meeting, and the unwarrantable nature of the military attack. On the other side, efforts were made to show that previous acts of violence on the part of the multitude, and the reading of the riot act, had justified the attack, and exonerated from legal criminality those connected with it. Ferrand, the

coroner, not having seen the body of the deceased, Mr. Harmer, on the 2nd of October, suggested the necessity of his complying with the law in that respect, and inquired if he had seen the body, to which Ferrand replied, "I shall give no answer," and, refusing to give any further information on the subject, proceeded afterwards to examine evidence for two entire days, and then, on the middle of the night of Tuesday, the 6th of October, he caused the body to be taken up, without giving any notice to the jury or the relations of the deceased.

After the coroner had seen the body, it was again interred, and he continued the irregular investigation until the 13th of October, when, without any reason assigned, he adjourned the inquest to the 1st of December! It would require very great charity to believe that this adjournment was not made in order that government might in the mean time decide how the matter should be disposed of. The Court of King's Bench was applied to for the purpose of compelling him, by *mandamus*, to resume and close the inquiry. The coroner showed cause against the *mandamus*, and the court declined interfering, on the ground that he had committed an irregularity, by which the proceedings might be considered as invalid. The coroner, by omitting to observe the law, had placed himself above the law! If the irregularity had been designed, it could not better have served the purposes of the government. Mr. Harmer, in an affidavit intended to form the ground of the other proceedings, which, however, were not taken, says; "That on the said 1st day of December he attended at the Star Inn (Manchester), the place appointed by the said Mr. Ferrand for the jury to meet in and resume their inquiry, but the said Mr. Ferrand did not attend; and this deponent saith that his deputy, Mr. Battye, who was there in his stead, dismissed the jury, by telling them that the inquest was at an end, and their services were no longer required; and this deponent further saith, that when the said Mr.

Ferrand adjourned the inquest, as before mentioned, there were several witnesses in attendance to give evidence respecting the cause of the death of the said John Lees, but the coroner refused altogether to take the examination of the said witnesses." It had been the boast of Englishmen that the sudden and violent death of the most obscure and wretched individual could not be passed over without the strictest investigation of all the circumstances attending such death. In those days it was the privilege of the most obscure and wretched coroner to render the law inoperative.

Amongst the meetings held to protest against the proceedings of the magistracy on the 16th of August, was one of the freeholders of the county of York, on a requisition to the high sheriff, signed by the Duke of Norfolk, by Earl Fitzwilliam, lord lieutenant of the West Riding, and many other noblemen and gentlemen. "It is worthy of remark," says the *Annual Register*, "that the reformers left the whole business of the day to be conducted by the noblemen and gentlemen who had come forward to summon the meeting,"—a proof that the so-much-abused radicals of the time were quite willing to be silent when they saw persons of station advocating the cause of justice. In consequence of the part which he had taken in this public meeting, Earl Fitzwilliam immediately received from the Prince Regent his dismissal from the office of lord lieutenant, a proceeding which greatly increased the unpopularity of the prince's ministers. Amidst the indignation which prevailed, considerable amusement was created by the issue of the following remarkable circular:—

"Whitehall, November 6, 1819.

"My Lord,—Having been informed that there are *laying* about throughout the kingdom, especially in the maritime part of it, a great number of cannon, which are private property, a considerable *part* of which were formerly used in merchants' ships, I beg leave to call your lordship's attention to this subject; and to request that you will direct the magistrates under your lordship's charge, to make the necessary inquiries within their respective districts, and if any gun

of this description should be found therein, that they will cause immediate steps to be taken, with the consent of their owners, for rendering them useless, or for removing them to a place of security.

“I have the honour to be, &c. &c.,

“H. H. Lieutenant of —.”

“SIDMOUTH.

This elegant and grammatical piece of official composition reminds me of a placard, or proclamation, issued by the sapient justices, denouncing the intended meeting to be illegal, and yet commanding the people to “*abstain from attending the said meeting at their peril.*” In allusion to this, Hunt, good humouredly, remarked, that very likely their clerk being gone to his dinner, the justices had composed this notice themselves, which at once would explain the absurdity of its language; for though a commission of the peace might have the magical effect of endowing a man with law, it did not follow that it could teach him to write English.

On the 23rd of November parliament was opened by the Regent, who was greeted in no flattering manner by the populace. In the lords, an amendment to the address was moved by Earl Grey, with reference to the Manchester proceedings, which were characterised as illegal and unconstitutional, and ably supported by Erskine, but negatived by 159 peers to 34. A similar amendment, after two days' debate, was negatived in the commons,—150 members voting for, and 381 against, inquiry. With such overwhelming majorities ministers saw that they could easily carry measures for further coercion. On the 30th of November, Lord Sidmouth, in the upper house, and Lord Castlereagh, in the lower, gave an outline of the coercive measures they had in contemplation in the then state of the country. They acquired the name of the “Six Acts,” and consisted of the following bills:—1. To take away the right of traversing in cases of misdemeanor. 2. To punish any person, found guilty, on a second conviction, of libel, by fine, imprisonment, and *banishment* (as first introduced

transportation) for life. 3. For preventing seditious meetings, requiring the names of seven householders to the requisition which, in future, convened any meeting for the discussion of subjects connected with church and state. 4. To prohibit military training, except under the authority of a magistrate or lord-lieutenant. 5. Subjecting cheap periodical pamphlets on political questions to a duty similar to newspapers. 6. And lastly, a bill giving magistrates the power of entering houses *by night* or by day, for the purpose of seizing arms believed to be collected for unlawful purposes. These bills were all carried by large majorities. The entering houses *by night*, and the severity of the restrictions on the press were briefly objected to; but there appeared a general concurrence in the necessity of strong measures. It was desirable to put down the demand for reform, and a boroughmonger's parliament was not slow in giving its aid to a tyrannical administration. The "Six Acts" did not effect the intended purpose. They had the effect of repressing the wilder and more violent of the radical orators; but in so doing, they allowed the principles of reform to be more quietly and more calmly considered by men who would otherwise have been frightened by the fierce front of an intolerant radicalism. In the meantime, many men remained in prison, charged with the crime of having been present at the meeting of the 16th of August. Their cases will be before us by and bye. It may here be stated, that no time was lost in endeavouring to create a prejudice in the minds of the public against those who were doomed to be victims of an arbitrary government, for in a few weeks Francis Philips issued a pamphlet, which he was pleased to entitle, "An Exposure of the *Calumnies* circulated by the Enemies of Social Order, against the Magistrates and the Yeomanry Cavalry of Manchester and Salford." To counteract this slanderous production, an able work was written and compiled by the late Mr. John Edward Taylor, entitled "Notes and Observations, Critical and Explana-

tory, on the Papers relative to the Internal State of the Country, &c.; to which is appended a Reply to Mr. F. Philips's Exposure, &c." Effingham Wilson, London, 1820. Numerous other tracts appeared on the subject; but this by Mr. Taylor will always be not only an important local record, but valuable as containing a detail of the lawless tyranny which at that time prevailed amongst officials of all ranks and degrees, from Lord Sidmouth down to the deputy constable Nadin. We now come to the trials.

To the occurrences of 1819, the people of Lancashire owe the system of giving regular and full reports in their local newspapers of all important public meetings and law proceedings. Previously, subjects of great consequence were dismissed in a single paragraph. A town's meeting in Manchester would be noticed much as follows:—"A large meeting was held in the Bull's Head, on Thursday last, for the resolutions of which see advertisement in our front page." The agitation kept up by the radicals, and the wanton stretch of power exercised by the Manchester magistracy, had excited so much attention that the conductors of the London press thought it worth their while to send able reporters to the scene of action, and the eagerness with which their descriptions and reports were read, induced the proprietors of the Manchester papers to take a little more trouble to satisfy public curiosity. From that period the Manchester papers may be referred to for a record of public events, coloured according to the politics of each, but yet furnishing materials from which he who takes the pains to ascertain the truth may furnish something like a faithful history. The London *Times* of the period set the example to the rest of the press, in the fulness and faithfulness of its reports; and in the paper of the 30th of August, it gives a very copious account of the proceedings on the examination and committal of Henry Hunt and his colleagues, for their appearance on the hustings on the memorable meeting of the 16th of August.

As it had been known that on the 27th of that month the determination of the government regarding the charges against the prisoners would be declared, a great crowd had collected in front of the New Bailey prison, and when the doors were opened the court-house was instantly filled. The only magistrates present were Mr. Norris (chairman), Mr. W. Hulton, Mr. Ralph Wright, Mr. William Marriott, Mr. T. W. Marriott, and the Rev. W. C. Ethelston. The names of the prisoners were called over, and answered in the following order:—Henry Hunt, Joseph Johnson, John Thacker Saxton, John Knight, James Moorhouse, Samuel Bamford, Joseph Healey, George Swift, Thomas Jones, Robert Wilde, and Elizabeth Gaunt. Elizabeth Gaunt answered to her name but feebly, being unable to speak out from a tendency to faint, in consequence of being cut and trampled upon in the field, and having been twelve days imprisoned. The chairman then addressed the prisoners:—"When you were last called up into this court, you were remanded on a charge of *high treason*. On remanding you, you were informed that the whole of the evidence had been sent up to London, to be laid before the law-officers of the crown, and in the meantime you were to be detained. It was not until this morning that a communication was made from government, stating that the law-officers of the crown had, for the present, abandoned the higher charge. This communication was not made to me; but there is a gentleman present, Mr. Bouchier, who has come with orders to proceed upon a less charge. The charge of *high treason* is *not yet abandoned*, but government proceeds against you for a minor offence."

The first witness called proved the purchase of two copies of the *Manchester Observer*, one of them containing the announcement of the meeting for the 9th of August.

"Who urged you to purchase the papers?" asked Hunt. The court would not allow the question to be answered. Hunt again asked—"You purchased the second paper on

the 14th of August?" The court would not allow the witness to answer.—Matthew Cowper, the next witness, was designated simply "of Manchester." Hunt asked for his address. The court would not allow the question to be answered. Mr. Hunt,—“Of what profession are you?” Witness: “I am an accountant.”—Hunt: “Is that your own profession?” Chairman: “Don’t answer that question.” Cowper swore to having seen certain flags and colours, one of them with a bloody dagger; the court would not allow Hunt to cross-examine him.—Richard Owen, a pawnbroker, was then examined, and swore to his own alarm, and his belief that the town was alarmed. Hunt asked him when it had occurred to him to note down what he had deposed to? The witness refused to answer the question, and the court decided that he was not bound to answer. Other witnesses deposed to having seen the male prisoners on the hustings. The evidence against Elizabeth Gaunt being only that she had been seen on the carriage with Hunt, the solicitor for the crown said he would not press for her prosecution, and she was discharged.

Mr. Hunt then addressed the court, denying that any sedition was intended, and arguing that there was no evidence against them to justify a committal for trial. The magistrates left the court for some time, and on their return the chairman said:—“Henry Hunt, and you all: we sent for Mr. Bouchier, in order that we might again carefully peruse the depositions. It is a most painful duty to me to commit you for a conspiracy. We can, however, *lay our hands on our hearts and say*, we have done our duty. As to the charge of conspiracy, though you might not have acted all together previous to the meeting, yet in the eye of the law, all those who commit separate acts, tending to one illegal object, are guilty of that crime. Coupling the two meetings together, taking into consideration the manner in which the last was

assembled, with such insignia and in such a manner, with the *black flag*, the *bloody dagger*, with '*Equal representation or death*,' you came in a threatening manner—you came under the banners of death, thereby showing you meant to overturn the government. There could be no free discussion where that flag was unfurled. The charge now is, that of having conspired to alter the law by force and threats. It is an illegal matter, and sufficiently made out, and calls upon us imperatively to commit you for a trial by a proper jury. It is now our painful duty to commit you to Lancaster Castle. On account of the seriousness of the charge, we shall require you, Henry Hunt and Joseph Johnson, to give bail, yourselves in £1000, and two sureties in £500 each, and all the others, themselves in £500, and two sureties in £250 each.

Johnson and Moorhouse procured bail, and were liberated. The other prisoners were sent off in hot haste to Lancaster Castle. "From the bar," says Bamford, "I was conducted to the yard of my former cell, where I was joined by several of the other prisoners, and we were asking what we should have for dinner, when an order suddenly came that we were to prepare to set off for Lancaster Castle. Our meal was soon dispatched, and we quickly bundled up our few things. We were then taken to the turnkey's lodge, and each hand changed, after which we were placed on a four-horse coach, in the inside of which were Mr. Hunt, Mr. Knight, Saxton, and Nadin. The outside party consisted of myself, Swift, Wilde, Healey, and Jones, with a number of constables armed with pistols. We were also escorted by a strong detachment of hussars, and thus, amid the huzzas of an immense multitude, we drove off." On the following night, Hunt and Knight procured bail, and left the others in the Castle. Bamford, in his "*Life of a Radical*," describes how they spent their time there, and how he was employed from the period of his own release till the trial at York.

The trial, which lasted ten days, was commenced at York, having been moved by *certiorari* from Lancaster, on the 16th of March, 1820, before Mr. Justice Bailey and a special jury. The counsel for the prosecution were Mr. Scarlett, Mr. Sergeant Hullock, Mr. Sergeant Cross, and Mr. Littledale, the leading men on the circuit. Mr. Holt defended Saxton, and Mr. Barrow was retained for Moorhouse and Jones. The other defendants pleaded their own cause. Mr. Charles Pearson, the late member of parliament for Lambeth, was attorney for the defence.

One of the first points attempted to be proved was the connection of the St. Peter's Field meeting with the drillings on White Moss. It was conceived that if the legal meeting could be connected with the illegal, it would prove that both were illegal! Samuel Morton deposed that he followed the procession which accompanied Hunt and Johnson through Withy Grove; he was on the opposite side of the street when they passed the house of Murray, a gingerbread baker, of Hanging Ditch, the man who had been beaten at White Moss; they hissed as they passed; the mob shouted out that they wanted some White Moss humbugs; the town was very tumultuous, and he was much afraid. A witness named Chadwick swore to the training on the Moss, and that the people in the procession hissed as they passed Murray's house. Murray himself swore that he had been beaten at White Moss, and that the people following Hunt hissed as they passed his house. Showeross, a clerk in the police-office, deposed that he was beaten at White Moss. A man, named Heywood, swore that on the 16th he saw men, in marching order, coming in the direction from White Moss towards Manchester. On such evidence was it attempted to be shown that there was a connection between the drillings on White Moss and the peaceful and legally convened meeting on Saint Peter's Field!

Further to give that meeting the character of illegality,

witnesses were called to swear that they, were afraid ! Roger Entwistle, an attorney, swore that the meeting must have consisted of 100,000 men ; that they were nearly all of the lower order ; and that the meeting was certainly calculated to excite terror and alarm.—Mr. F. Philips also swore that he was much alarmed, and that he had heard many taunting expressions used on the field to every man who wore a good coat. Mr. Hunt attempted to get from this witness some acknowledgment that the yeomanry had attacked the people, but was stopped by the judge.—The Rev. Dr. Smith, of the Grammar School, swore that he was much alarmed, and that he had shut his windows and locked his doors.—Matthew Cowper also swore to his alarm. In cross-examination this witness acknowledged that he had left his situation in consequence of having taken money from his master's till.—Joseph Mills, a "runner" of Nadin's body, swore that the meeting was calculated to excite alarm.—Jonathan Andrews, of Harpurhey, deposed as to his own alarm.—Mr. Thomas Hardman and Mr. Joseph Green also spoke to their own fears and apprehensions.—Mr. Hulton, of Hulton, amongst other evidence, swore that *he had seen from the window where he stood a number of men, close to the hustings, with their arms locked together.* He said, in cross-examination : "I could perceive the persons locked together, because they formed a complete cordon, and were bare-headed. I believe solemnly that these people near the hustings were locked arm-in-arm. I saw them linked, I believe, by the arms. They were close together as they could be, and were distinguished from the rest of the crowd. Though the distance was so great from the hustings as to prevent my distinguishing an individual elevated on the hustings, still I, and others, could see the persons beneath locked together. I swear this from my own knowledge, and not from what I was told."

Mr. Hunt.—Can you, sir, standing in that elevated

situation, and looking round on the comparatively small number of persons now present, see whether their arms are locked?

When this staggering question was put, which, for the moment, astounded the witness, some clapping took place, both in the body of the court and in the gallery. A person named James Kellenbeck was pointed out and brought before the judge as the man who commenced the clapping. This was proved by two or three witnesses. Mr. Justice Bailey said he would give him time till Monday to make an affidavit in excuse. The prisoner said he was ready to swear that he did not clap, but moved his hands merely to prevent himself from falling. The judge begged of him, in the name of God, not to make such an affidavit, for he saw him distinctly clapping. After a severe reprimand, he was committed till Monday, that he might have time to reflect upon his conduct, and draw up any excuse he might have to offer.

Mr. Hunt.—You will now look round the benches, where that crowd is elevated, one above another, and say whether you can see what they are doing with their arms?

Witness.—Must I answer that, my lord?

Mr. Justice Bailey.—You may declare whether the opportunity you had of viewing the meeting on the 16th of August was better than that which you have of seeing the people now present.

Witness.—I had a much better opportunity of seeing the persons at the meeting than I have of observing those in the court!! (This witness must have been ten times farther from the hustings than he was from the persons in court.)

Mr. Hunt.—Could you see the arms of the persons then?

Witness.—I could see them wedged, and, I believe, linked together.

Mr. Hunt.—Could you see any part of their arms?

Witness.—I could distinctly see the outside men linked.

Mr. Hunt.—Then, from the appearance of the others, you believe the rest were linked?

Witness.—I have no doubt of it.

The witnesses for the defence were generally of a more respectable class than those who were called for the prosecution. The following are extracts from their evidence, all proving the peaceable character of the meeting:—

Mr. John Smith, one of the editors of the Liverpool Mercury:—"In no case whatever did I see any attempt to resist nor any encouragement to resistance given by Mr. Hunt, or any other person, either by word, look, or gesture. I saw no sticks lifted up against the military. I saw no brickbats or stones thrown till the close of the dispersion, when I saw one stone thrown. If any stones or brickbats had been thrown, or any sticks raised in defiance of the military, I must have seen it. I am more than six feet high, and therefore was enabled to see all that took place. I neither heard any offensive expressions uttered, nor saw any acts of violence committed by the people, from the time of their assembling to their complete dispersion."—*Mr. Shuttleworth, now Mr. Alderman Shuttleworth*:—"I witnessed several parties pass the Exchange, to go to St. Peter's Field. They were marching with considerable regularity, in the form of a procession, and conducted themselves in an extremely decorous manner. In consequence of the observations which had been made as to the number of sticks carried at previous meetings at Manchester, I determined to count, as accurately as I could, the proportion on this occasion. I did so in several hundreds, until, indeed, I thought I had a fair average; and the result left no doubt on my mind that there was not one stick to ten persons. The sticks were walking-sticks, such as are usually carried by country persons. Their progress (the cavalry's) seemed to be checked by the dense crowd, and this appeared to me to cause in them considerable confusion. I did not observe any of them separated from the rest.

They appeared in one circular mass. The people did nothing to resist them. I saw them go on the hustings. I saw not a stone, brick-bat, or bludgeon, hurled at them." Mr. John Tyas, reporter of the *Times* newspaper, who had been taken into custody on the hustings, deposed:—"I recollect an officer went up to Mr. Hunt, with his sword in his hand, and desired him to surrender. He said he would not surrender to a military officer, but if any peace-officer came up he would surrender. Nadin then came, as it appeared to me, from under a waggon; Mr. Hunt immediately surrendered, after first desiring the people to be quiet. If there had been groaning, hissing, and hooting at the extremity of the crowd, the cheering of those round the hustings would have prevented me from hearing it. I saw no sticks flourished by the people as the cavalry approached. Had they been flourished I must have seen them."—Mr. James Brettargh, of Pendleton: "I went to the meeting about twelve o'clock. When 'God save the King' was played, all the people that I supposed belonged to the meeting took off their hats, but the constables did not take off their hats. Mr. Hunt said, 'If any one create any disturbance, put him down and keep him down.' This appeared to be addressed to some one belonging to the hustings. I did not hear him say, pointing to the military, 'There are your enemies; if they molest you, put them down and keep them down.' It was impossible, as the soldiers had not arrived at the time. When the cavalry came in, they advanced at either a canter or a gallop; they came as fast as they could. There were not any stones or bricks thrown at them, nor any sticks thrown at or lifted up against them."—Mr. Edward Baines, jun., of the *Leeds Mercury*: "My eyes were directed towards the cavalry till they began to advance towards the hustings. When they had got about ten yards into the crowd, I turned away. I saw no stones or brick-bats thrown, nor any sticks held up against them. I had heard nothing from Mr. Hunt of the

words 'be firm,' but the words 'give three cheers;' these words were repeated, as were the words 'be firm.'"—Mr. William Nicholson, of Lees: "I saw no difference in the appearance of Manchester on that day, save in one instance, —I saw a public-house with the windows shut; a female servant said they had received orders from the magistrates not to sell any beer on that day. I saw a procession pass; I took notice of their sticks; I think about one to four had sticks; they were for the most part switch sticks."—Mr. Thelwall, a builder: "Nothing that I heard or saw on the 16th of August induced me to believe that my property was in the slightest danger. I was in the northern corner of the field, at the angle opposite to Buxton's house. I saw no attempt to oppose the military. I heard no groanings, hootings, or hissing at them. I saw neither stones, sticks, nor brick-bats thrown at them, or thrown up in the air as they passed. I saw no sticks held up at them."

Mr. Robert Grundy, who had been one of the special constables that day, deposed: "I saw no insult or violence offered to any person whatever. I was surrounded by a thick multitude. The persons around me were aware that we were special constables. Some of the constables showed their staves. I perceived no insult offered to them."—Mr. John Molineaux, lamp manufacturer: "I met my daughter on the ground. She expressed a wish to go, and went with her uncle. My daughter is sixteen years of age. I remained on the field till the meeting was dispersed. My daughter remained with me and my brother-in-law. I saw the military arrive. No opposition was made to the military that I saw. There was no groaning, or hooting, or hissing at them. I perceived nothing done to intimidate them. I saw no stones, or sticks, or brick-bats thrown at them, or thrown up in the air."—Mr. James Scholefield: "The different divisions had bands, which played the air generally called 'Rule Britannia,' and the national anthem of 'God save the King.' When the latter was played, the people,

for the most part, took off their hats. I felt no alarm, nor did I hear any person express alarm at the meeting. I saw the military arrive. As the cavalry advanced, the people held up their hats as a sort of guard against the cuttings of the swords. There were no brick-bats, stones, or sticks hurled against them.”—The bloody dagger was accounted for by the 48th witness for the defence, William Burns, who swore that he had something to do in making the Bury flag: he made a piece of tin in the form of a *fleur-de-lis*, and was to paint it yellow, but not having much time on his hands, he painted it red. It came to him on the Saturday evening late, and not liking to paint it on Sunday, and having no yellow paint by him at the moment, he used red. This was the only reason.—Mr. T. B. W. Sanderson spoke to the peaceableness of the meeting. He was a merchant in the firm of Sanderson and Co., at Manchester. He was there on the 16th of August, and saw the meeting assemble. He transacted his ordinary business during the whole of the day. He saw nobody that day in apparent alarm, in consequence of that meeting, until its dispersion by the military.—The Rev. Mr. Hindmarsh, of the New Jerusalem chapel, Salford, also deposed to the peaceableness of the meeting: “I remained upon the field until the cavalry arrived. I saw nothing before their arrival which excited any fears for the safety of person or property, or the safety of the town; I had not the least idea of any such thing. I saw nothing which, in my judgment, could excite the fears of any rational, temperate, sober-minded person.”

It had been proved by the strongest evidence, not even attempted to be rebutted, that the meeting of the 16th of August had been perfectly peaceable. It is worth our while to know clearly how that perfectly-peaceable meeting acquired the character of illegality which justified the cutting down, and trampling upon, unarmed men and defenceless women and children, and exposed those who attended to a long and rigorous imprisonment. The

attempt was made, eagerly and vindictively, on the part of the prosecution, to substantiate a charge of seditious conspiracy, by bringing evidence to establish some remote connection of that assemblage with a meeting that had previously been held at Smithfield and with the trainings at White Moss; but the judge, Mr. Justice Bayley,* either saw that the evidence was insufficient, or that a conviction on such strained construction of the law would be odious to the country, and he laid the main stress, in summing-up, on the use of flags, as tending to incite the assembled multitude. The inscription, "Equal Representation or Death," he said, was highly illegal and seditious if intended to recommend or imply, by the alternative, that equal representation must be unconditionally obtained or life sacrificed in the attempt; the inscription "No Corn Laws," if construed as meaning that the people would have no such laws, and would forcibly resist them if enacted by the legislature, must be considered as illegal in an extreme degree; the inscriptions, "Annual Parliaments," "Universal Suffrage," "Vote by Ballot," were legal enough as an expression of opinion only, but criminal if intended to show a resolution to obtain these objects illegally; "Taxation without representation is unjust," if meant to imply that it is criminal and unjust to levy a tax upon any man who had not a direct share in the representation, had a tendency to excite contempt of the constituted authorities of the realm; "No Borough-mongers," had been an inscription at the Smithfield meeting, and therefore it was bad; the main question was,

* There never was a man better fitted for the purpose than this judge. His appearance was prepossessing, tall, slender, and grave; mild in manner, but cunning in effect, and at the very time he led the people to suppose he was aiding the prisoner, according to the farcical notion of being his counsel, he was studiously entangling him in the meshes of special pleading, so as to secure his victim upon the altar prepared by Sidney and Castlereagh. For services thus rendered, this pious judge, and editor of an edition of the Book of Common Prayer, with notes, which teaches humility and mercy, was created a Baronet on retiring from the Bench.

whether such banners and such an assemblage were calculated to excite terror, and if the jury thought so they should give their verdict accordingly.

The jury, after an absence of five hours, returned to the court and delivered their verdict: "Moorhouse, Jones, Wilde, Swift, and Saxton, NOT GUILTY. Henry Hunt, Joseph Johnson, John Knight, Joseph Healey, and Samuel Bamford, GUILTY of assembling with unlawful banners an unlawful assembly, for the purpose of moving and inciting the liege subjects of our Sovereign Lord the King into contempt and hatred of the government and constitution of the realm, as by law established, and attending the same."

The whole of the high treason, for which, in the first instance, these men were to be tried—the whole of the seditious conspiracy for which they actually were tried, thus dwindled down into a conviction for having attended a meeting which was only *at that moment* found to be an illegal one; for, let it be borne in mind that Mr. Norris, the magistrate acting in the name of the magistracy of the district, writing to Lord Sidmouth at eleven o'clock on the night previous to the meeting, declared his conviction that, as the law stood, he believed nothing could be done, on the ground of its illegality, to prevent the meeting being held. If the chairman of the Manchester magistracy, constantly corresponding with Lord Sidmouth, and with all the information that could be obtained from the crown lawyers, declared his conviction, on Sunday night, at eleven o'clock, that he could not regard the meeting to be held on Monday morning as otherwise than one legally convened and legally held—when he regretted that such was the state of the law that the magistrates felt they could not prevent that meeting being held—surely it might have been expected, in the sentence pronounced on the prisoners, that their strong belief of the proceedings being in perfect accordance with the law, would be taken into consideration, and the mildest possible punishment inflicted. But Hunt

was sentenced to be imprisoned for *two years and six months*, and Johnson, Healey, and Bamford to *one year's* imprisonment; and so rigorously was the sentence carried out, that Johnson was not permitted to go, in custody of an officer, to see his wife on her death-bed! The three prisoners in Lincoln jail, elevated by the severity of their sentence to the rank of martyrs, seem to have had no solace from their compulsory association. Bamford takes some pains to show what a fool Healey was; and he complains that when Mrs. Bamford came to the prison, Mr. Johnson asked her to partake of breakfast with himself and his wife before he told her where her husband was! Of the selfishness of Hunt, confined in Hechester jail, Bamford complains also in the bitterest terms, and loses no opportunity of ridiculing his vanity, egotism, and tom-foolery." Of John Knight he writes in equally disparaging terms. Some friends at Nottingham had written to Bamford, that if a pound note would be of use to him they would send it. He says, "I thanked them and declined it, stating at the same time that it would be acceptable to John Knight, at Lancaster Castle, and it was sent to him. But, as I have found, old John would have seen me boiling the stones of the castle wall for dinner sooner than he would have done me, or any one else, a like turn." This sadly lowers the poetry of the martyrdom.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RE-ACTION.

HITHERTO the proceedings of the Sidmouth and Castle-reagh government had been only against the undistinguished amongst the multitude, or the leaders of the mob—against men whose punishment might be supposed not likely to excite the sympathy of more influential classes. Encouraged by their success—by the great majorities they commanded in both houses—and in the belief that “well-timed vigour” would suppress, at once and for ever, every demand for an amended system of representation, and impelled by the necessity of going on in the course commenced, they soared at higher game. Sir Francis Burdett was not then at the height of his fame. Cobbett had denounced him as insincere, and he had lost some portion of his former great and almost unexampled popularity. Whether it was to regain his lost ground, or from generous impulse, he stood forward manfully to denounce the atrocities of the 16th of August, and addressed the following letter, dated the 22nd of August,

“TO THE ELECTORS OF WESTMINSTER.

“Gentlemen,—On reading the newspaper this morning, having arrived late yesterday evening, I was filled with shame, grief, and indignation, on account of the blood spilled at Manchester.

“This, then, is the answer of the boroughmongers to the petitioning people—this is the proof of our standing in no need of reform—these the practical blessings of our glorious boroughmongers’ domination—this the use of a standing army in time of peace. It seems our fathers were not such fools as some would make us believe, in opposing the establishment of a standing army, and sending King William’s Dutch guards out of the country. Yet would to heaven they had been Dutchmen or Switzers, or Hessians or Hanoverians, or

anything rather than Englishmen, who have done such deeds. What ! kill men unarmed, unresisting, and, gracious God ! women too ; disfigured, maimed, cut down, and trampled on by dragoons ! Is this England ? This a Christian land ? A land of freedom ? Can such things be and pass by, like a summer cloud, unheeded ? Forbid it every drop of blood in every vein that does not proclaim its own owner bastard. Will the gentlemen of England support or wink at such proceedings ? They have a great stake in their country ; they hold great estates, and they are bound in duty and in honour to consider them as retaining fees on the part of their country, for upholding its rights and liberties ; surely they will at length awake, and find they have duties to perform.

"They never can stand tamely by, as lookers on, whilst bloody Neros rip open their mother's womb ; they must join the general voice, loudly demanding justice and redress ; and head public meetings throughout the United Kingdom, to put a stop, in its commencement, to a reign of terror and of blood ; to afford consolation as far as it can be afforded, and legal redress to the widows and orphans — mutilated victims of this unparalleled and barbarous outrage.

"For this purpose, I propose that a meeting should be called in Westminster, which the gentlemen of the committee will arrange and whose summons I will hold myself in readiness to attend. Whether the penalty of our meeting will be death by military execution, I know not ; but this I know, a man can die but once, and never better than in vindicating the laws and liberties of his country.

"Excuse this hasty address. I can scarcely tell what I have written ; and it may be a libel, or the Attorney-General may call it one just as he pleases. When the seven bishops were tried for libel, the army of James II., then encamped on Hounslow Heath, for supporting arbitrary power, gave three cheers on hearing of their acquittal.

"The King, startled at the noise, asked, 'What's that ?' 'Nothing, sir,' was the answer, 'but the soldiers shouting at the acquittal of the seven bishops.' 'Do you call that nothing ?' replied the misgiving tyrant, and shortly after abdicated the government.

"Tis true, James could not inflict the torture on his soldiers — could not tear the living flesh from their bones with the cat-o'-nine tails — could not slay them alive. Be this as it may, our duty is to meet ; and England expects every man to do his duty. — I remain, gentlemen, most truly and faithfully, your most obedient servant,

"FRANCIS BURDETT."

This letter, issued at a time when the public mind was strongly excited, producing a great sensation throughout the country, ministers were forced from their cowardly policy of attacking only the poor and friendless. They felt themselves compelled to proceed against the higher delinquent. An information was filed against Sir Francis by the Attorney-General. Ministers did not dare, however, to have the trial in London, where the alleged libel was published. Government had found, on former occasions, that London juries were not always to be relied upon. The letter had been *put into a post-office in Leicestershire*, and it was determined that the case should come before a Leicestershire jury, less likely to contain radical elements than a London one. The trial took place at the Leicester assizes on the 23rd of March. Mr. Denman, counsel for Sir Francis, contended that there was no proof whatever of the publication of the letter in the county of Leicester, but the Judge (Best) over-ruled the objection. This overbearing *best* of judges was afterwards made a lord, and distinguished himself in support of the Orange clubs and other equally creditable affairs. Sir Francis addressed the jury with great spirit and eloquence, justified every word he had written, and denounced the conduct of the magistracy as strongly in his speech as he had in his letter. The Leicestershire jury justified the belief of ministers in their subserviency. After a consultation of only two minutes, their foreman stepped into his place and called out, "Guilty of libel."

Mr. Denman remarked that the verdict did not find the publication in Leicestershire. Mr. Sergeant Vaughan contended that it did. Mr. Justice Best then asked the foreman,—“Do you find the libel published in Leicestershire?” To which that worthy promptly replied,—“Guilty of libel *in Leicestershire!*” The case was argued at great length in the Court of King's Bench, where the verdict had been impeached, but the result was that Sir Francis

was sentenced to a fine of £2,000, and to three months' imprisonment.

Close upon this followed the trial of John Knight, George Dewhurst, Nathan Broadhurst, John Anderson, William Fletcher, John Bury, John Austin, and James Wade, at Lancaster assizes, 1st of April. The indictment contained twenty-one counts, the substance of which was that they had conspired to go, and caused others to go, armed to a meeting at Burnley, for the purpose of hindering and obstructing the magistrates and peace-officers in the execution of their duty. The main evidence against them was that Colonel Hargreaves, in making a dash at the procession as it went through Burnley, had carried off a staff which "*appeared to have been prepared for a pike handle ;*" and a man (suspected of being a spy) had sworn that he had seen some men (also suspected of being spies) with pistols in their possession. The judge, Mr. Justice Bailey, charged that if any person or persons went armed to a meeting, determined if attacked to resist, the meeting was illegal. All the prisoners were convicted with the exception of Wade and Austin, as to whom the prosecution had been withdrawn. Under this construction of the law any meeting might be made illegal. It would need the employment of only two or three spies, who might show each other the pistols they carried.

At the Cheshire assizes, April 10th, Sir Charles Wolseley, Bart., and Joseph Harrison, a schoolmaster and preacher, were tried for uttering seditious words at a meeting held at Stockport, on the 12th of July. The "open and advised speaking" was not sworn to by any short-hand writer, but on the recollection of persons who had been sent by the magistrates. Amongst the witnesses was Mr. John Winterbottom, solicitor, who, a few years ago, underwent the sentence of the court for a more serious offence than the utterance of what the courts at that time ruled to be seditious words. The evidence was from the memory of the

witness. Mr. Pearson tried the extent of Mr. Winterbottom's memory, by reading a part of Harrison's speech as reported, and asking him to give the court the substance of what was read, but the witness confessed his inability to do so. On such testimony as this it was shown that the ministers of the crown had been abused,—that it had been declared that the House of Commons did not represent the people,—and that Sidmouth and Castlereagh had employed spies, and therefore ought to be detested. On similar testimony it was shown that some men had sticks, and that a constable, one of "Nadin's runners," had been knocked down on pretence that he was a spy. Of course the defendants were found guilty.

Joseph Harrison was again indicted, at Chester, on April 18th, for having, in a sermon, preached at Stockport, on Sunday, the 15th of August, unlawfully, seditiously, and with intent, &c., uttered the following words: "That the government had starved the people, and it was right that the people should starve the government." "That the commons' house was the house of assembly of the people, where their rights should be protected; but that, when the people asked for their rights, they threatened to make war upon them." "Can laws proceeding from such a source be called the laws of the land? or is it fit that they should be obeyed?" The principal witness was not a short-hand writer, but a Mr. Thomas Cowper, an accountant, who had made himself somewhat notorious by his evidence on Hunt's trial at York. Even he had not taken notes at the time, but had written them at the Bulkeley Arms, for the use of the Manchester magistrates. It turned out that the starving of the government meant only that people should abstain from beer, spirits, and other exciseable commodities. He was found guilty. He was then put on his trial again, upon another indictment, and one witness, who was very drunk, and was several times reproved by the court, certainly swore to very seditious words. The jury, believing the drunken

witness, found the defendant guilty. For the first offence he was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment, and for the second, to commence after the first period had terminated, another imprisonment of twelve months!

Previous to this trial the illustrious Jeremy Bentham had published a pamphlet, in which he argued that unless every thing charged in an indictment was *proved*, the jury should bring in their verdict "not guilty." Harrison was charged with a *false* libel on the government and the House of Commons, in calling them tyrannical. The jury were sworn to give a true verdict, *according to the evidence*; there was *no* evidence that the libel was a false libel; and, therefore, he might have claimed an acquittal. But Harrison made a monotonous and tiresome speech of four hours' length, wearying out the patience of the jury, when he should have been convincing their judgment; and probably their verdict was given more on a consideration of what he said, there and then, for which he was not on trial, than on the evidence that the drunken witness had given. We shall come to cases hereafter in which juries rejected the *dicta* of courts, that charges of falsehood and malice were mere words of course, and needed no proof. The period of the radical agitation was the grand reign of judge-made law.

The tory ministers, rejoicing in the convictions they had obtained in the courts of law, did not lose the opportunity of congratulating the country on the suppression of sedition, and of assuring it that there was no nation in the world which enjoyed so much liberty and happiness. The following passages from the king's speech, at the opening of parliament, on the 27th of April, 1820, reminds me strongly of what a whig administration said of the prevention of a great rebellion on the 10th of April, 1848:—

"My Lords and Gentlemen,—

"Deeply as I regret that the machinations and designs of the disaffected should have led, in some parts of the country, to acts of open violence and insurrection, I cannot but express my satisfaction

at the promptitude with which those attempts have been suppressed by the vigilance and activity of the magistrates, and by the zealous co-operation of all those of my subjects whose exertions have been put forth to support the authority of the laws.

"The wisdom and firmness manifested by the late parliament, and the due execution of the laws, have greatly contributed to restore confidence throughout the kingdom, and to discountenance those principles of sedition and irreligion which had been disseminated with such malignant perseverance, and poisoned the minds of the ignorant and unwary.

"I rely upon the continued support of parliament in my determination to maintain, by all the means entrusted to my hands, the public safety and tranquillity.

"Deploring, as we all must, the distress which still unhappily prevails among many of the labouring classes of the community, and anxiously looking forward to its removal or mitigation, it is, in the mean time, our common duty effectually to protect the loyal, peaceable, and the industrious against those practices of turbulence and intimidation by which the period of relief can only be deferred, and by which the pressure of the distress has been incalculably aggravated.

"I trust that an awakened sense of the danger which they have incurred, and of the arts which have been employed to seduce them, will bring back by far the greater part of those who have been unhappily led astray, and will *revive* in them *that spirit of loyalty*, that due submission to the laws, and that attachment to the constitution, *which subsists unabated* in the hearts of the great body of the people, *and which*, under the blessing of Divine Providence, *have* secured to the British nation the enjoyment of a larger share of practical freedom, as well as of prosperity and happiness, than have fallen to the lot of any nation in the world."

If this had been indicted as the composition of any of the persons previously convicted, any Yorkshire, Leicester, or Cheshire jury would have found the writer guilty of blasphemy, and of intending to bring the government into contempt and ridicule.

We are now arrived at a period when the forced silence of the radicals gave men in the middle classes an interval of calm, in which they could quietly consider the defects of our representative system, undisturbed by the agitation

which had raged around them. There can be no doubt that the harsh sentences which had been pronounced in 1820 had struck terror into the hearts of the noisy demagogues, who, out of their very cowardice, had thundered out their recommendation by physical force. In their holes and corners they thought of Hunt, immured in Ilchester, and of Bamford, Johnson, and Healey, in Lincoln jail, none of them even accused of recommending an appeal to arms; and they wisely resolved to keep out of the way of danger. Yet radicalism was not extinguished, not even damaged, by the compulsory calm. Instead of great meetings, where noisy braggarts usurped the place due to the intelligent and thoughtful men who represented the better part of the industrial classes, there were the little congregations of the workshop and at the fireside, at which the principles of representation were calmly discussed, and comparatively sound opinions formed, as to what ought to be the real objects of a government. Amongst the middle classes, also, the condition of the country became the subject of deep consideration, and many were convinced that tranquillity could not be expected in a country where nine-tenths of the community possessed not even a shadow of representation. Besides, the blind old loyalty, which had made men respect authority even when they did not fully approve of its exercise on some occasions, was greatly shaken. Pitt, whose tyranny had an air of some greatness in it that inspired awe, was dead; and his successors, in their mingled timidity and cruelty, inspired contempt and hatred, rather than respect and fear. George the Third, whose regard to the decencies of domestic life had kept alive, in spite of his waste of human life and of treasure, some of that attachment to royalty in the abstract, which had been a characteristic of the people during his long occupation of the throne, now slept with his forefathers, and a son reigned in his stead, whose undisguised extravagance, voluptuousness, and profligacy, gave rise to almost

universal disgust. Men began to think what loyalty meant when royalty no longer commanded their respect.

The employment of spies on the part of government had done as much to produce a change of opinion as the harsh exercise of authority. There might have been some credit reflected on the government by their prevention of the projected mad march of the blanketeers on London, by their putting down the insurrection in Derbyshire, and by their suppression of the rising in Scotland, which resulted in the capture of the rebels at Bonnymuir; but it was known that Oliver, a paid government agent, had counselled the blanket meeting and the Derbyshire outbreak, and in Lancashire it was well known that representations of the country being ripe for revolt, which occasioned the rising in Scotland, were the work of spies; that although it was to have been simultaneous, not one, even of the most foolish and rash Lancashire men gave credence for a moment to the government agent; and an incendiary placard, posted in Manchester on the 2nd of April, calling on the people to effect a revolution by force was laughed to scorn. Even the wicked conspiracy of Thistlewood and his confederates to assassinate the king's ministers at a cabinet dinner, had no effect in exciting sympathy in favour of the latter, for there was the strongest evidence to prove that Edwards, a government spy, was the originator of the scheme, and that he had provided the arms with which the murders were to have been effected.

The personal character of the king, the combination of cowardice and oppression in the conduct of his ministers, and especially the baseness of entrapping men into crimes which led them to the prison and the scaffold, had shaken the long established faith of the people in the constituted authorities. It seemed impossible that they could sink themselves further in public estimation—impossible that they could find a lower depth. But the profligacy, the cowardice, and the tyranny, were again to be manifested;

the object a defenceless woman—the instruments, again, suborned and perjured spies! Manchester partook in the general feeling that the Queen was quite as much sinned against as sinning, and the proceedings against her did much to lessen amongst us that blind reverence to royalty which had long characterised the town and neighbourhood.

The events described, and the course to which public opinion seemed to be verging, induced reformers to think of some better means than they had previously possessed for the expression of their opinions. There had been many indications during the year 1820 of an increasing desire, among the middle classes, for general and local reforms; and the conviction widened, that they might be more easily effected by calm but spirited discussion than by violent denunciations proceeding from great assemblages. The want of an efficient press began to be felt. I had often represented to the gentlemen with whom I associated the service that might be rendered to the cause of reform, by making *Cowdroy's Gazette* a more efficient organ of our principles; and in conversations with my relative, David Prentice, of the *Glasgow Chronicle*, and with one or two proprietors of the *Scotsman*, I became convinced that not only would great public good be effected by the establishment of an able journal, but that it would be remunerative as a business speculation. Others conversed on the matter with Mr. Edward Baines, of Leeds, and Mr. Egerton Smith, of Liverpool, whose opinions were found to coincide with those I had endeavoured to impress upon the minds of my friends. The sum of twelve hundred pounds was subscribed by, I believe, twelve individuals, and Mr. John Edward Taylor was requested to take the undertaking upon himself, he, at that time, being the only person of our number whose time was not fully occupied by the management of extensive mercantile or manufacturing concerns, and having given, by his spirited defence when put on his trial for libel, by his appearances on the

platform, and by his writings, evidence of the possession of abilities which were likely to render him highly useful as a public journalist and an oral advocate of liberal principles. My scheme had been to raise a paper upon the foundation laid by Cowdroy, and to continue him as the printer and publisher. A negociation was entered into between Mr. Taylor and Mr. Cowdroy, but it failed, and the former resolved to establish a new paper, if the subscribers to the fund would share with him in the risk.

It was agreed that the money should be lent on the condition that it should be repaid if the paper succeeded, so that its repayment could be made from profits, but that it should not be regarded as a debt if it were lost in making the experiment. There was generosity in this arrangement, the whole risk being encountered by the subscribers, except as regarded Mr. Taylor's personal services. And yet it was not more than fair that, the public benefit being the object, the possible loss should not be borne by a single individual. The paper might probably be so far in advance of public opinion as to be denied public support. The probability was, from Mr. Taylor's avowed radicalism, and his classification of Church of Englandism as a marketable commodity, that he would encounter bitter opposition from a very influential portion of the community. Under such circumstances, a mere ordinary loan, to be withdrawn at will, might have exposed the paper to extinguishment before the experiment, necessarily one requiring years for completion, could be fairly made. It was necessary for the success of a *bold* movement that it should be made *freely*—that the person making it should not have the fear of his own ruin before his eyes, in his attempt to lead public opinion—which lagged far behind. It was a wise and just arrangement to ensure a fearless course in the attack of general and local misgovernment—the possibility of being behind public opinion, or of a too cautious waiting for its advance.

was never once thought of. There might occur occasions when a little gentle counsel to observe caution might be thought necessary—it never was supposed possible that the youthful and ardent reformer would need the spur. There was a road to fortune and to great public utility opened—and there was no risk but that of loss of time to the individual—a young man, not then in any business for which he was peculiarly fitted.

The prospectus of the newspaper was drawn up with great caution. Some of the more ardent reformers thought that it should have defined more explicitly the kind of reforms that were to be advocated; but it was argued, on the other side, that as the personal friends of the editor all knew that he went the full length of the radicalism avowed by Sir Francis Burdett, it was better not to make a broad declaration of political opinions which would give offence amongst the classes having advertisements to bestow, but to wait for the *opportunities* which would be sure to arise of *vindicating the principles of radical reform*. Many opportunities presented themselves, but seldom thought the right ones, as subsequent events show. The following is a copy of the prospectus:—

“ On Saturday the 5th of May, 1821, will be published,
Price Sevenpence,
No. 1 of a New Weekly Paper,
To be entitled

THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN.

“ Printed and published by J. Garnett, No. 28A, Market-street, Manchester, where orders, advertisements, and communications will be thankfully received after the 30th of April; and in the meantime, by Mr. Sowler, bookseller, St. Ann's Square, Messrs. Robinson and Ellis, St. Ann's Place, and Mr. John Ford, Market-street.

“ PROSPECTUS.

“ It may be safely asserted, that no former period, in the history of our country, has been marked by the agitation of questions of a more important character than those which are now claiming the attention of the public. To any one who regards, for a moment, the

conflicting views and wishes of the commercial and agricultural interests,—the consideration which may arise out of the existing laws for the regulation of our currency, the present and the anticipated pressure of the national debt and of taxation,—this statement will be sufficiently apparent.

“But there are other subjects, of greater and more permanent importance, which the circumstances of the times are forcing upon public attention. The effect of the great diffusion of education within the last quarter of a century, is attested by the greatly increased interest which political subjects excite, and the immense extension of the circle within which they are discussed. It is of the utmost importance that this increased interest should be turned to beneficial account; that it should be made effective in promoting all those ameliorations in our laws and political institutions, of which experience has proved the necessity, and in fixing upon a broader and more impregnable basis the fabric of our liberties.

“Though the concerns which relate to the internal prosperity of this country must always be of paramount consequence to its inhabitants, foreign politics will now be a subject of anxious observation; for there perhaps never was a period at which the affairs of other nations could awaken, in the minds of Englishmen, so deep an interest as at the present moment. The friends of freedom, everywhere, must watch, with intense anxiety, the progress of those efforts which several continental states, as well as others in the new world, are now making to free themselves from the incumbering pressure of antiquated and despotic governments, and to establish, in lieu thereof, institutions conformable to the increased intelligence of the age, and calculated for the promotion of public happiness and the security of popular rights. Proportionate to the interest with which these magnificent experiments are regarded, will be the wish that nothing may impede the success, or detract from the purity of their course; that no internal commotions, or external attacks, excited or dictated by the unprincipled hostility of foreign and arbitrary governments, may defer the consolidation of such political establishments as are suited to the condition of the people, as the national will requires, and the national wants demand.

“The considerations which have just been stated seem to render the influence of the public press, the spirited discussion of political questions, and the accurate detail of facts, particularly important at this juncture; and we believe it will be generally admitted, that no existing local newspaper has possessed a degree of public consideration correspondent with the wealth and intelligence of this town and

the surrounding district, and their high rank in the scale of national importance. The present, therefore, seems a favourable opportunity for establishing a newspaper which, by supporting a consistent character for sincere and undeviating attachment to rational liberty, may promote that union and concentration amongst the friends of freedom in this neighbourhood which is in itself so desirable, and the want of which has been hitherto so sensibly felt.

"In conformity with these views, arrangements are now making for the speedy publication of a paper under the title above given. It will zealously enforce the principles of civil and religious liberty, in the most comprehensive sense of those terms; it will warmly advocate the cause of reform; it will endeavour to assist in the diffusion of just principles of political economy; and support without reference to the party from which they emanate, whatever measures may, according to the matured and unbiassed judgment of its conductors, tend to promote the moral advantages or the political welfare of the community.

"The foreign intelligence of the week will be regularly and succinctly detailed, whilst particular attention will be paid to parliamentary debates. The most prominent speeches on each side of every important question will be given as fully as possible, and the remainder will be condensed with as much attention to the preservation of the spirit of the debate as the limits of a weekly paper will permit.

"The commercial connexions and the knowledge of the conductors of the *Guardian* will, they apprehend, give them the means of occasionally stating, with accuracy and effect, the condition of trade and its prospects, particularly as far as regards that important branch the cotton manufacture. They hope thus, in some measure, to supply that information on this subject, the deficiency of which is often so obviously apparent, both amongst public men and those connected with the press.

"Whilst they will exercise the right of spirited and vigorous animadversion upon public questions, and boldly expose public delinquencies, they will sedulously avoid all tendency to private slander, and endeavour to prevent the best prerogatives and most important duties of the press from degenerating into calumny and abuse.

"With a view to make their journal as generally interesting as possible, occasional notices of new books, and other subjects of a literary and scientific character, will be introduced by the conductors of the *Guardian* into its columns, which they will always feel a

gratification in opening to the spirited and liberal communications of correspondents.

“Manchester is the centre of a most populous district, throughout which the *Guardian* will circulate; and particular attention will be paid to all subjects of local interest. Authentic articles of intelligence coming under this head, will, at all times, be thankfully received. Details of interesting proceedings, whether of a commercial or political nature, in our courts of law, will from time to time be given; whilst every exertion will be made to present to its readers full and accurate reports of important public meetings, both in this and the neighbouring towns.

“The *Manchester Guardian* will commence its course with a very considerable circulation. It has secured an extensive and valuable patronage throughout the surrounding districts, amongst the classes to whom, more especially, advertisements are generally addressed; and whilst its conductors respectfully solicit the support of advertisers both in this and the neighbouring towns, they confidently assure them that it will offer a most eligible medium for giving extensive publicity to their notices.”

It will be seen that there is no promise of opinions upon the representative system that might not safely range between the annual parliaments, universal suffrage, and vote by ballot, of Major Cartwright, or the transfer of the East Retford seats to Manchester, the great instalment asked for by the editor's whig friend, Mr. G. W. Wood. There was ample verge and room enough for advocating the greatest or the smallest measure of reform, without incurring the charge of making any departure from the promises of the prospectus.

When the paper appeared, it was seen to be a very great improvement upon the then existing journals. With the *Leeds Mercury* and the *Liverpool Mercury*, the *Glasgow Chronicle* and the *Scotsman* before him, Mr. Taylor had good models to follow. He was the first newspaper proprietor in Manchester who was capable of acting as editor, and he had engaged as reporter Mr. Jeremiah Garnett, a young man who had been an assistant in Mr. Wheeler's printing office, and was occasionally employed in reporting.

Regular "leaders," and substantively good, if not very full, local reports appeared weekly, and there was a business-like look about the new paper which none of the others possessed. Never had a new journal better chances of success. The tory journalists looked with contempt upon their bold competitor, and, prognosticating his speedy extinction, made no attempt to improve upon their old jog-trot method of filling up their columns. "Leaders," with them, were a foolish innovation, and reports an unnecessary expense. Their way was the old way, and would continue to be the best way. New papers had been tried before and had not succeeded; the new-fangled thing would not last; there was no use in making any effort in competition with it; it would go down of itself. A capital thing for the circulation of the *Guardian* was this contempt. And then, as to advertisements; Mr. Wheeler, who had the main share, would receive none after one o'clock on the Friday; he had what was then a large impression (about 3,000) of his paper to print, and he had to go to press at three o'clock; to bring advertisements at one o'clock on the day before publication was a thoughtless thing that needed reproof. The *Guardian* folks received those satisfactory accessions as late on Friday night as anybody choose to bring them—received them with thanks; it was rather inconvenient to receive them at a later hour, but the inconvenience would be incurred rather than disappoint the respectable parties who wished their announcements to appear next morning. All this was working into the hands of the innovator; he could not have contrived better had he had the contrivance to himself. And yet the paper made slow, very slow progress. Mr. Cowdroy's circulation was little trenched upon, for the people had respect for his principles, and did not like to leave an old public servant, and it was the custom to send advertisements to Wheeler, and few had the courage to break through the custom. This slow progress was discouraging; would there be any harm in

endeavouring to conciliate, without any sacrifice of principle, a portion of the public who had something to bestow?

A short time before the establishment of the *Guardian*, it had been resolved to apply to parliament for an act to widen Market-street, then a narrow lane; at one place only wide enough barely to allow one cart to pass another, with a foot pavement on each side only eighteen inches wide. The following gentlemen had been appointed on the 4th of April, 1821, to act as commissioners under the bill:—

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Robert Andrew, | Benjamin Heywood, | John Railton, |
| Jonathan Andrew, | Thomas Harbottle, | James Ramsbottom, |
| Edward Baxter, | David Holt, | Charles Rider, |
| John Bradshaw, | Thomas Hardman, | William Roylance, |
| James Brierley, | James Hibbert, | John Ratcliffe, |
| John Bennett, | John Harding, | Thomas Sharp, |
| James Bury, | Thomas C. Hewes, | J. B. Saunderson, |
| Richard Clegg, | John Kirkinan, | John Shuttleworth, |
| John Chippendall, | James Kennedy, | Richard Smith, |
| James Clarkson, | John Kenworthy, | J. E. Taylor, |
| T. H. Cardwell, | Samuel Knight, | Peter Taylor, |
| Robert Duck, | John Lomas, | Jas. Touchett, jun., |
| Jonathan Dawson, | Edward Loyd, | Joseph Todd, |
| Thomas Darwell, | John Moore, | William Tate, |
| Joseph Flintoff, | Francis Marris, | G. W. Wood, |
| Jeremiah Fielding, | F. M. Mallalieu, | Thomas Wilkins, |
| George Fraser, | Robert Millington, | John Walker, |
| Thomas Fleming, | James M'Connel, | Richard Warren, |
| George Grundy, | Henry Newbery, | Thos. Worthington, |
| William Garnett, | Richard Potter, | W. W. Walmesley, |
| John Greaves, | Thomas Peel, | Gilbert Winter, |
| R. H. Greg, | Shakespeare Phillips, | Thomas Watkins, |
| George Hole, | Thomas Potter, | James Wood, |
| Thomas Hoyle, | Thomas Parker, | Peter Watson. |

This was a formidable body of commissioners to carry into effect a single purpose; but £200,000 had to be expended, and all parties were comprised in something like a fair proportion at the time. One fourth were whigs and

reformers, one fourth had taken little part in politics, and one half were tories. Mr. Taylor, on coming from their meetings, used to say that some of them, whom he had not met across a table before, had expressed their surprise to find him a reasonable gentleman, and not a rough radical bear; and I used to say to him, "Beware, Taylor, lest, in your desire to conciliate their good opinion, you permit them to rub the rough points off your radicalism;" and he would laugh and say there was no danger. This caution was not unnecessary; but, like many others, it failed in producing the effect intended.

"Beware of innovation; if you begin, you do not know where you will end," is the usual cry of the enemies of reform. Why should not one reform lead to another? This improvement of Market-street—Market-lane, as it had been called—led to other improvements. A good street required good approaches, and they were made. A broad street showed advantageously in comparison with narrow ones, and the latter were widened. A handsome street was contrasted with a mean one, and the taste for beauty followed the provision for convenience. There is no "finality" in such matters; why should there be in political clearings and constructions? A combination of the useful and the beautiful is sought in our streets and public buildings, and yet we are called to admire the narrow, the dark, the crooked, the mean and the unsavoury in our national institutions.

CHAPTER XIV.

A PERIOD OF CALM.

A HISTORY of the progress of political opinion, in any locality, would be defective without some notice, not merely of the establishment, but of the progress and workings of the newspaper press. Although, in the first instance, a newspaper may be established in consequence of the demand for the expression of particular opinions, and may be continued mainly to reflect the political feeling of a portion of the community, it begins to act upon the public mind, and, in its turn, assumes to dictate or insinuate the views of its conductors, and from being an organ becomes an instructor—for evil or for good, as the case may be. There is a reciprocal action. The public, or a portion of the public, acts upon and influences the newspaper; the newspaper acts upon and influences the public, or that portion of the public whose general opinions it represents. The desire to promote certain opinions leads to the establishment of a paper. It depends upon the principles or the temperament of its conductor whether he will, still adhering to the implied bond between his readers and himself, urge them onwards, or counsel circumspection and caution,—whether he will, in the same army, be in front with the bold and the impetuous, or in the rear with the timid and the prudent. In either case he will, to a certain extent, be influential. In either case he is still with his party; if at their head, he has the ardent; if in the rear, he has the cautious with him. As the organ of either division, he has the influence of his position, and he may use it to accelerate or retard its movement, without being liable to the charge of being a traitor to the general body,

The ultimate politics of the *Manchester Guardian* were influenced greatly by the temperament of its conductor. The ardour of youth overcame his *vis inertiae*, and, for a time, he was an ardent leader; but, as years grew upon him, the disposition grew to eschew rash front-fighting. He had, besides, imbibed the leading principles of Malthus—and one does not often see a Malthusian a very ardent reformer: regarding the multitude as intruders upon nature's feast, after the places at the table have been all taken, he can scarcely forgive the impertinence, and seldom gives his warm sympathies to the intruders. Mr. Taylor appeared as a journalist at the same time that Mr. Searlett (Cobbett's *Lawyer Searlett*) appeared as a poor-law reformer. Like Mr. Searlett, he wished to fix a maximum on the amount of poor's rate to be paid, no matter how much the amount of poverty to be relieved might increase; and, like him, he wished all persons who should be improvident enough *to marry* after that date to be excluded from all future relief. A meeting was called, to be held in the board-room of the Salford workhouse, on 24th May, 1821, to take Searlett's bill into consideration; and as he had declared that he would go and give it his support, I declared, in return, that, although I had never previously taken part in any public meeting, I should go and oppose him.

Nobody supported the principles of the bill but Mr. Taylor. He said he was rather disposed to approve of the principle of fixing a maximum on a liberal scale to the amount of rates, and that the clause which prohibited relief to persons who should marry after the passing of the act, unless in case of sickness, infirmity, or old age, *had his decided approbation*. With respect to the removal of the poor belonging to other parishes, he was in favour of a change in the mode of giving relief, rather than an entire abrogation of the law of settlement. Mr. Taylor went on to a point on which he and I were quite in agreement. He said that, great as was the evil arising from the poor-rates,

there was another burthen, of scarcely inferior importance, to which Mr. Searlett had not thought proper to apply any limitation; he meant the county-rates. The increase of these rates had been in a much greater proportion than that of the poor-rates; and, in all probability, a great part of that increase might be accounted for from the absence of a proper control over the expenditure. The treasurer was merely required by law to publish an account once a year, in one newspaper; and this mode of publication was as completely nugatory, with respect to the county at large, as a notice to the inhabitants of Manchester when affixed on the church door. He certainly was not prepared to join in a petition against Mr. Searlett's bill, but if such a petition were voted by the meeting, he should move a clause praying for greater publicity and an efficient control with regard to the expenditure of the county-rates.

Although one or two in the meeting spoke in favour of the principles on which the existing poor-laws were founded, I felt that it was necessary that the meeting should be further informed before it came to a decision, and said that as a clause was inserted in the bill for the express purpose of permitting an increase in the amount of county-rates, a petition regarding the bill ought to contain some reference to that part of it. In the year 1750 the amount was only £40,000, which had increased in 1815 to £2,034,000. Thus it had advanced to *fifty times* its former amount; whilst the sum expended on the poor, the increase of which furnished the argument for the supporters of the bill, had only increased *ninefold*, an increase which was scarcely equivalent to the increase of population, of *taxes*, and the price of the necessaries of life occasioned by a depreciated currency. The bill seemed to be intended entirely to abolish the poor-laws, which were right in principle. The clause for restraining marriage was particularly objectionable, because if relief was not afforded by the parish those who were refused relief would become

vagrants. The preamble of the bill was false, inasmuch as it recognised the assumption that provision for the poor increased the number of paupers, which was contradicted by the fact that in 1750 the amount of rates did exceed, and indeed was rather less than their amount in 1688. If the law itself had had the least tendency to increase the number of the poor, that tendency would have shown itself as soon as a legal provision was made for their support; but as no increase had taken place, up to 1750, the period from which Mr. Scarlett's statements commenced, it was a legitimate conclusion that in periods of prosperity the poor-rates would not increase, and that the recent augmentation was fairly to be attributed to *taxation*, the evils of *war*, and the fluctuations of *commerce*. To attempt to fix a maximum was highly presumptuous. Could a maximum be fixed to the amount of taxation, or a limit to human misery and wretchedness? It was unjust to deprive the labourer of that legislative provision to which he was entitled, whilst he was exposed to the operation of laws injurious to his interests—to the *corn-law*, for instance, which, whilst it raised the price of the poor man's bread, lessened the demand for the produce of his labour. With regard to the improvident habits said to be fostered by an unlimited provision, it might be replied that the wretchedly poor were the most improvident; that in *Ireland*, where there were no poor-laws, early marriages were more frequent than they were in *England*; and that industrious habits were more likely to be preserved when the distressed labourer was relieved at the parish table, and he would return more cheerfully to his work when he obtained it there than after having been compelled to go farther and beg for charity.

The resolutions passed were strongly condemnatory of the bill as cruel and unjust; similar resolutions were passed in Manchester, and a general feeling against it being manifested throughout the country the bill was defeated. It may be supposed that there could not be a long continuance

of agreement of opinion between myself and one who would have destroyed the future legal provision for the poor, whilst the corn-law remained unrepealed, whilst emigration was prohibited, whilst a turn-out for wages was punished as a breach of the law, whilst for the mass of the people there was not even the shadow of representation, and whilst the taxation required to defray the expenses of a long war was crushing the people to the earth. "Are you going to give a report of this meeting?" I asked. "No," was the reply; "I think it has not been of so much importance." I said, "Then, if you think it is of no importance to you, you will surely have no objection to my asking Cowdroy to report it?" The report appeared in the *Guardian*, but on the following week appeared a laboured defence of the clauses which the meeting had condemned, purporting to be in reply, not to me, but to William Cobbett.

The kind of loyalty, which transferred the reverence which should be paid to the kingly office to the individual who occupied the throne, had been greatly lessened by the persecution of the queen by George the Fourth; but coronations had always been occasions for display, and disliked as the prince regent had been, the inhabitants of Manchester were not disposed to innovate upon the ancient custom. A splendid procession was got up, which was simultaneously in passage along Piccadilly, Bank Top, Downing-street, Ardwick Green, Higher Ardwick, Chancery-lane, Ancoats Bridge, Great Ancoats-street, and Swan-street, a length of two miles and a half. But the pageant was not what it had been in the olden time. There was much more of a staid and sober loyalty than had been seen before. At several places in the line of progress, particularly in Salford, Bank Top, and in Great Ancoats, the Manchester Yeomanry, who had been thanked by the prince regent for their share in dispersing, at the point of the sword, a legally convened and peaceably held meeting,

were assailed with groans and hissings; and there was not, on the whole route, any manifestation of enthusiasm. In many of the trades also there was a strong disinclination to join in the festivities of the day, from an idea that to assist in the celebration of a ceremony from which the queen was excluded, would seem to imply an approbation on their part of the cruel proceedings against her. The people enjoyed the spectacle and the holiday, but, so far as the procession was concerned, there was an absence of all those exhibitions of exuberant loyalty which used to be manifested on public occasions during the reign of the decencies-observing George III. There needed something more than the parade of a procession, to excite a livelier demonstration. Loyal feeling required a stimulant to rouse it from its languor—and it was supplied by some who remembered the glorious and uproarious doings of more church-and-king times. The *Guardian* thus describes the scenes which were exhibited in the evening:—

“Here we should have been glad to close our account of the proceedings of the day, but we have a further duty to discharge—unpleasant and, perhaps, invidious. About five o’clock commenced the distribution of meat and beer to the populace. The stations for this were—the New Market, Shudehill; the Shambles, at Bank Top; those at the top of Bridge-street; in Camp Field Market; the George and Dragon, Ardwick; the Clarendon public-house, Chorlton Row; in Hulme, in Strangeways, in Mottram’s Field, and in Oldfield Road. At many, we fear we may say most of these places, scenes were exhibited which even the pencil of a Hogarth would fail to pourtray. At the New Market, Shudehill, the meat and loaves were thrown out high from the doors and windows of the warehouses where they had been stored; the populace scrambling for them as they could. It resembled the throwing of goods out of the windows of a warehouse on fire rather than anything else we can compare it to. There was shameful waste and general confusion. At an early hour the stage erected for the applicants to stand upon gave way, and one person was killed, and several dangerously wounded by the fall. When the liquor was distributing, we saw whole pitchers thrown indiscriminately among the crowd—men holding up their hats to receive drink; people

quarrelling and fighting for the possession of a jug ; the strong taking liquor from the weak ; boys and girls, men and women, in a condition of beastly drunkenness, staggering before the depository of ale, or lying prostrate on the ground, under every variety of circumstance, and in every degree of exposure, swearing, groaning, vomiting, but calling for more liquor when they could not stand, or even sit, to drink it. Every kind of excess, indeed, which the most fertile imagination can conceive, or the most graphic pen describe, was there witnessed in nauseous and loathsome extravagance. Never did we see, and we hope to God never again shall we see, human nature so degraded. The scenes of which we have now attempted a faint description, were exhibited, though, perhaps, to scarcely the same extent, at Camp Field, in Salford, and at the Shambles in Bridge-street ; and we trust the experience of this day will have given to the committee who managed the proceedings a lesson which they will never forget. As to the distribution of meat and liquor, there are two or three lives lost, and fourteen patients in the infirmary, several of them dangerously injured, from the events of the day. It must be understood, however, that we consider the bulk of our labouring population not implicated in these disgraceful scenes. The wretched actors in them were that rabble, without conduct or fixed principles, which is always to be found amongst the population of an immense town. We do not so much wonder at these brutal excesses, as lament that men of education, of character, and of talent, should have furnished the temptation to them."

These beastly excesses excited so much disgust as greatly to forward the cause of temperance. Henry Hunt, in his desire to cripple an oppressive and tyrannical government, had prepared the way by inculcating an abstinence from the use of exciseable commodities, and a number of radicals had become water-drinkers. The authorities of Manchester, alarmed at the progress of such abstinence, had issued, at the public expense, innumerable printed papers, recommending the free use of the "old English beverage," good brown ale, and had denounced all who advocated the abandonment of that "cheering and strengthening" drink as enemies to the corporeal *constitution* of Englishmen. Hunt's advice to abstain was greatly strengthened by the shameless advice from the "constituted authorities" to drink. Work-

ing men, in their self-respect, began to say that they would not make beasts of themselves to please boroughreeve, or constable, or parson. There needed but a disgraceful exhibition, like that which has been described, to suggest the propriety of some association amongst working men to discontinue practices which degraded them. From this time, irrespective of political motives, commenced little social meetings, at which the jug of water on the table supplied the place of beer and gin;—and these little parties were the precursors of that general temperance movement which has so greatly improved the aspect of society amongst the humbler classes, who are now about as outwardly decorous as the *gentlemen* were when I first visited Manchester, in 1811, when it was no unusual thing to see three or four “respectable” manufacturers staggering down Market-street-lane, in the broad daylight of a summer afternoon, trolling out their drunken catches.

The political economy of Manchester was better than its politics. It had long enjoyed a singular immunity from the distress occasioned by the failure of banks. In 1819, a committee of the House of Lords had reported that, from the year 1790 to 1818, no fewer than 273 commissioners of bankruptcy had been issued against country bankers, generally issuing their own notes. More than half of these failures had taken place in five years of general commercial distress—in 1793, 1810, 1814, 1815, and 1816. In 1814 twenty banks had failed, in 1815 twenty-six, in 1816 thirty-seven. From these failures and their very disastrous consequences Lancashire was almost entirely free, whilst Yorkshire had suffered largely. In Lancashire there were only from three to six banks which issued local notes, whilst in Yorkshire there were sixty-seven. In Yorkshire the issue of local notes had given the bankers great temptation to discount largely and imprudently, and that county was deluged with their notes, greatly to the encouragement of rash speculation. In periods of adversity the sudden dimi-

nution of discounts produced great and wide-spread distress, aggravated by the failure of banks, against which there had been a "run." From these mischievous alternations Lancashire was almost free. It had to encounter periods of great commercial depression, but they had not been aggravated by excessive issues and sudden contractions of a local currency. Its exemption from these sudden changes might be traced to an event which had occurred long previous to the time of which we are writing—the failure of Livesey and Co., of Manchester, a failure, probably, more disastrous and overwhelming than Lancashire had ever before encountered, or, considering the relative amount of commercial and manufacturing transactions, has ever suffered since. The experience derived from that event had created a universal dislike to local notes, and the general opinion had operated upon the bankers of the district, and repressed the issue of those "rags" which Cobbett so often declaimed against.

The Bank Restriction Act of 1798 had permitted an extraordinary issue of Bank of England notes, which had consequently become greatly depreciated in value. With the restoration of peace was to have come the restoration of a cash currency. Mr. Wade, in his *British History*, says that this was effected before the passing of Mr. Peel's bill in 1819, but the great depression of prices, deeply felt in Manchester during the latter half of that year, and the first half of 1820—a depression by which the comparatively small business in which I was a partner suffered to the amount of £3,000—showed that the previous preparation for the resumption of cash payments had only half done its work. Mr. Peel's bill had fixed May, 1823, as the period of resumption, but the bank, by an accumulation of gold, was enabled to anticipate the fixed time, and recommended specie payments in May, 1821. Mr. Hopkins, in his *Great Britain during the last Forty Years*, says, "It was considered that the peace rendered it necessary that preparations should

be made for the returning, at no distant period, to the old metallic standard of value, and for repealing the Bank Restriction Act. This not only induced the Bank of England to begin to reduce the quantity of their notes in circulation, and to increase their stock of gold, but it also compelled country bankers to limit their issues, as they also would be more liable to be called upon to pay in gold. Such considerations, no doubt, induced a more cautious issue of notes; and the quantity of currency was kept down nearly to what it would have been if the exports had been suffered to draw gold from the commercial world to furnish a metallic currency for Great Britain." Mr. Hopkins, like Mr. Wade, attributes alterations of the value of the currency, after May, 1821, to other causes than Peel's Bill; but the diminution of bank issues went on till 1822, greatly to the depression of prices.

The total amounts of Bank of England and country bank notes in circulation were:—

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| In 1818..... | £47,109,838 |
| In 1819..... | 43,024,485 |
| In 1820..... | 36,320,551 |
| In 1821..... | 28,863,601 |
| In 1822..... | 26,393,690 |

A gradual diminution of the paper currency to the amount of nearly £11,000,000 in five years, and a consequent fall in the prices of commodities, occasioned the cry, like that which still continues to arise from Birmingham, for more paper. The country was suffering the consequence of its former intoxication, and, in its exhaustion, wanted a repetition of the stimulating dram. There were symptoms of preparation in Manchester for the issue of small local notes. But Livesey's failure, and the failure of country banks in 1814, 1815, and 1816, were not forgotten, and the first business establishments in the town and neighbourhood were determined to nip the contemplated innovation in the bud. A requisition was made to the boroughreeves

and constables of Manchester and Salford, to call a public meeting on 23rd August, 1821, "to consider of the measures necessary for securing a satisfactory currency for these towns and neighbourhood, in consequence of the cessation of the issues of small notes by the Bank of England." The following are some of the signatures:—

| | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Hibbert, Wanklyn, & Bradshaw, | Thomas Houldsworth, |
| John Greenwood, | Thomas Potter, |
| W. Birch, | T. J. and J. Ashton, |
| Robert Duck, | James Beardoe, |
| F. Phillips and Sons, | James Burt, |
| Thomas Peel and Brothers, | Buchan and Shaw, |
| H. J. and R. Barton, | T. and M. Harbottle, |
| Philips, Wood, and Co. | Hole and Potter, |
| John Allen and Co. | James and William Barrett, |
| Leighs and Darwell, | Thomas Hilton, |
| George Neden, | Thomas Wilkinson, |
| James and John Holford, | Stephen Sheldon, |
| Diekson, Watson, and Co. | Holywell Twist Company, |
| Broadhurst, Marris, and Co. | Robert and William Garnett, |
| Edward Baxter and Co. | John Shuttleworth, |
| James Cooke, | Markland Brothers, |
| Benjamin Sandford, | W. Grant and Brothers, |
| Peter Ewart and Co. | Thomas and Richard Potter, |
| C. F. Brandt and Co. | Fielden Brothers, |
| T. Kirkham and Sons, | John Edward Taylor, |
| W. Hardman and Sons, | Benjamin Binyon, |
| Otho Hulme and Sons, | Blackwall and Sons, |
| Jackson, Bushforth, and Scott, | James Kennedy, |
| John and William Heygate, | Gardner and Harter, |
| Edenborough, Chittenden, & Co. | Harvey, Tysoe, and Co. |

Amongst the requisitionists were persons of every shade of political opinion, tories, whigs, radicals, and Cobbettites. At the public meeting, Mr. George William Wood, afterwards member, for a short time, for Lancashire, and subsequently for Kendal, partner in the great house of Philips and Co., took the lead. The following may be taken as a summary of his arguments:—

1st. Local notes were not a legal tender; no person was

obliged to receive them in payment of a debt; and an angry creditor, or a vindictive landlord, might incarcerate a debtor, although payment was offered in the only circulating medium in the neighbourhood.

2nd. A great variety of local notes might be put in circulation, issued by firms of different degrees of stability, whilst amongst the labouring classes, amongst whom such notes would chiefly circulate, they would not be able to discern the good from the bad, and would be compelled to take all indiscriminately.

3rd. Local notes were not adapted for distant payments. The notes which were issued at York would not pass at Newcastle, and the currency of Newcastle would be of no use at Edinburgh; and thus the traveller would be compelled, at every remove, to exchange the notes in his possession for those of the district which he was about to enter.

4th. A serious evil would be the risk of loss on local notes. In periods of great commercial distress and alarm, it frequently happened that the stability of a bank began to be suspected—a run ensued, and it fell; and it not unfrequently occurred that the banks of the district became involved in one common ruin.

5th. A serious objection to the issue of local notes was the facility which they afforded to improvident trading. An advance of his own notes cost the banker nothing, and the speculator procured them with a facility which tempted him to trade far beyond his capital, to the great detriment of firms whose business was conducted on the solid basis of property and capital.

Mr. Sothern, an agent on the Bridgewater Trust, then under the management of Mr. Bradshaw, who, from the great extent of his power and the manner in which he exercised it was commonly called Duke Bradshaw, informed the meeting that if the public were to sanction the continuance of issues of local notes, Mr. Bradshaw, who paid

£300,000 a year in wages, would issue his own notes, and in all probability would soon have a million in circulation. Mr. Thomas Sharp, afterwards of the firm of Sharp, Roberts, and Co., contended stoutly that all inconvenience from the issue of local notes would be obviated by requiring them to be payable in London, and stated that he had the authority of Messrs. Jones and Co., and Messrs. Heywood and Co., who were willing to make their notes thus payable; but the meeting, unwilling to allow any modification of a system which had a tendency to create a false appearance of prosperity at one time and an undue depression at another, refused to listen to the proposal. Mr. John Edward Taylor said that no one could doubt the perfect security of all dealings with the highly respectable banks named; but others might arise who could not be so safely trusted; the meeting had already heard that one gentleman, whose paper would probably be accepted as readily as those of our own bankers, intended to issue an enormous amount of notes for wages; and if they might credit the expressed determination of other houses, the town would soon be deluged with local paper, and exposed to the danger of great loss. Mr. Sharp had proposed an amendment, but it was negatived, and the original resolutions were passed by a great majority. They contained a series of arguments similar to those noticed as forming a summary of Mr. G. W. Wood's speech; but the practical result was the issuing for signature of the following declaration:—

“Manchester, August 23, 1821.

“We, the undersigned, being deeply impressed with the inconvenience and danger to be apprehended from the circulation of local notes in this great commercial town, do hereby declare it to be our intention not to receive any such notes in payment after the 31st instant, except in cases of *extreme necessity*; in all which cases we pledge ourselves not to circulate such notes.”

The declaration was very numerously signed, and so well observed, that, in the great panic at the close of 1825,

which brought so many country banks to the ground, Manchester was comparatively unscathed. The advertised declaration, with the names attached, filled the six columns of the first page of the *Manchester Guardian*, a very pretty addition to the advertisements of the new paper, which had only twenty-seven others, filling four columns, about its usual number and measure.

The defeat of Sidmouth's bill, ten years previous to this period, had not extinguished the spirit of intolerance. The reader of the present day will peruse, with curious interest, the proceedings adopted against a respectable gentleman for the crime of preaching the gospel in the open air, and will be reminded of the persecution which was encountered some half century before, by John Wesley and his colleagues, when they presumed to think that God might be worshipped, and his revelations made known, under the canopy of the heavens, as well as in temples made by the hands of men.

At the Salford sessions, July the 23rd, 1821, Mr. Samuel Waller, a respectable cotton spinner, of Ashton-under-Lyne, a lay preacher amongst the primitive methodists, was indicted for having, in the king's highway, in that town, unlawfully and injudiciously caused and procured a great number of persons to assemble together, obstructing the said highway, to the great damage and common nuisance of the liege subjects of our lord the king; and with making a noise, riot, tumult, and disturbance; and with making such riot by shouting and singing, and wholly choking up and obstructing the street and highway.

Mr. Starkie, who was employed for the prosecution, forgetting the sermon on the mount, began his address to the jury by declaring that if any one would produce him a text from scripture to support the practice of open-air preaching, he would consent to an acquittal! He hoped that the verdict of the jury would be such as to convince the defendant that neither he nor any other person, not

even a minister of the church of England, if it were allowable to conceive that a clergyman should ever so far forget his duty, had a right to obstruct the highway, *ranting and roaring*, to the common nuisance of his majesty's subjects, on pretence that he was doing his duty. He did not mean to deny the defendant's right to preach; he had a right to preach, in proper places, and there let him *rant and roar* as he pleased. Mr. Starkie then told the jury that a bear had once been removed because his growling disturbed the neighbours; and he concluded his address by saying, that if the defendant, like the bear, was determined to rant and roar, he must do it in proper places.

There was not any proof of obstruction. The deputy constable said the people were singing merry tunes. Another man said they sung like ballad singers down the street. When a hearse was approaching, making some noise, Mr. Waller preached a little louder, and witness "thowt it rather hawkward." A horse or carriage might, he thought, go through.

Mr. Courtney made an eloquent defence, denying any obstruction and any nuisance, and asking the jury, as Christians, to give their verdict in favour of one who had only done what had been done by the Saviour.

The *Reverend* W. R. Hay, the chairman of the quarter sessions, who had commanded the military attack on a peaceable and defenceless multitude on the 16th of August, 1819, and had been rewarded by being presented to the rich living of Rochdale, told the jury they had only to ask themselves whether the assembling of 200 or 300 persons in public day, in the public streets, was or was not a nuisance. Christianity, he said, had nothing to do with the question.

The jury having found that Mr. Waller had obstructed the street, the *reverend* chairman inquired whether, after the verdict had been given, as he took it for granted that the prosecution was not instituted with a view to a vin-

dictive punishment, any compromise could take place, by the defendant entering into sureties *not again to offend in like manner*? Mr. Waller was not disposed to promise that he should not again preach in the open air, and declined to apply for any mitigation of sentence.

The *Reverend* Mr. Hay then addressing the defendant, told him that the sentence about to be pronounced was not intended to be vindictive, but to show him that individual opinion was not to be set up against the law. He was then sentenced to three months' imprisonment, and to give security, himself in £50, and two sureties in £25 each, *to keep the peace and be of good behaviour* for two years from the period of his liberation!

On Tuesday, October 19th, Mr. Waller, having endured his three months' imprisonment, appeared before Mr. Norris, the stipendiary magistrate, to enter into recognizances to keep the peace, the sureties being Mr. John Potter and Mr. Thomas Harbottle. When the recognizance was read,

Mr. Waller begged the indulgence of the court for a moment. He understood that the effect of the recognizance into which he had just entered, was nothing more than to bind him to keep the peace, which he might conscientiously say he had never broken.

Mr. Norris.—That is a question into which I cannot enter. You are now bound to keep the peace, and you must keep it.

Mr. Waller.—I merely meant to say, that as I cannot conscientiously refrain from preaching the gospel—

Mr. Norris.—You must keep the peace, or your recognizance, and those of the gentlemen who are bound with you, will be forfeited.

Mr. Waller.—It is my intention and wish to keep the peace; but I beg to know whether my preaching the gospel, not in the street, will be considered as a breach of the peace?

Mr. Norris.—*I shall not answer any questions put to me*

on the subject. You appear to have a correct view of the nature of the recognizance into which you have entered, and I can give you no information on the subject.

Mr. Norris then directed Mr. Waller to be taken down to prison, but his solicitor, Mr. George Hadfield, said that he had already been imprisoned three months. *The jailer said that months were always taken, at the sessions, to mean calendar months*, and the justice taking the jailor's interpretation of the law, Mr. Waller was taken to prison for six days more. It is a maxim of law, that "there is no wrong without a remedy;" but this, like many others, is only to be met with in books. In proof of this it may be stated, that an application was made on behalf of Mr. Waller to the Court of King's Bench, for a *mandamus*, commanding the clerk of the peace to enter on the record the sentence as pronounced, which was for "three months," whereas it appeared it was entered three *calendar* months, which increased the punishment. However, the court said it had no authority to order the court of quarter sessions to draw up their record in a particular form and manner, and therefore it refused to interfere. So that if the clerk of these justices had inserted *twelve* instead of three months, Mr. Waller, it would seem had no remedy. Such was the temper of the times and the determination of what are called courts of *justice*. Mr. Waller was of a sect, some of whose members might write the word "precher," instead of "preacher," and to persons guilty of such atrocity, the liberty taken by the apostles of Christ was not to be permitted in a country where Christianity is "part and parcel of the law of the land."

Before we take leave of the period of Hunt-radicalism, it may satisfy a not impertinent curiosity to look at the comparative progress of the old organ of the reformers, *Cowdroy's Manchester Gazette*, and the new paper which had assumed to itself the task of directing public opinion, the *Manchester Guardian*. The following gives a list of

the advertisements in each, commencing from the first number of the *Guardian* :—

| GUARDIAN. GAZETTE. | | | GUARDIAN. GAZETTE. | | |
|--------------------|----|----|--------------------|----|----|
| May 5 | 47 | 34 | Aug. 4 | 27 | 22 |
| „ 12 | 42 | 33 | „ 11 | 19 | 22 |
| „ 19 | 34 | 23 | „ 18 | 29 | 23 |
| „ 26 | 30 | 27 | „ 25 | 44 | 31 |
| June 2 | 27 | 30 | Sept. 1 | 29 | 27 |
| „ 9 | 39 | 32 | „ 8 | 29 | 20 |
| „ 16 | 29 | 35 | „ 15 | 29 | 28 |
| „ 23 | 39 | 31 | „ 22 | 29 | 26 |
| „ 30 | 37 | 38 | „ 29 | 28 | 31 |
| July 7 | 43 | 39 | Oct. 6 | 31 | 32 |
| „ 14 | 34 | 27 | „ 13 | 41 | 28 |
| „ 21 | 35 | 21 | „ 20 | 35 | 34 |
| „ 28 | 27 | 28 | „ 27 | 36 | 28 |

Weekly average :—*Guardian*, 33½ ; *Gazette*, 28½.

This was but a discouraging commencement of the new journal. To have beaten by only five advertisements a week a paper printed on old and battered type, and unable to defray the expense of an editorial and reporting staff, showed, on the one hand, that there was a reluctance to desert an old and faithful servant of the public, under whatever disadvantage he continued his labours ; but, on the other hand, the fact that the two liberal papers could not muster more than sixty-two advertisements between them, while the tory papers had three times the number, argued that the advocacy of wide reforms did not find much favour with the “ advertising public.” Here was seen the wisdom of the arrangement that Mr. Taylor should not be called upon to repay, except from realised profits, the £1,200 raised to establish the *Guardian* ; for perseverance, at his own risk, in the seemingly hopeless task of establishing a new paper, under such circumstances, would have been an evidence of public spirit which the projectors could not have had a right to expect of any one. It may easily be imagined, however, that many misgivings must have

assailed the conductor, and that many times he must have deeply pondered how, of course without any sacrifice of principle, he could escape the odium which still attached itself, in the estimation of the influential, to an unmitigated expression of that sort of radicalism which had been "vulgarised" by its association with the names of Hunt and his more humble, hard-handed, and not very smooth-tongued colleagues.

In the preceding part of this chapter a list is given of fifty names of individuals and firms which were subscribed to a requisition for calling a meeting in opposition to local notes, and it will be perused with a melancholy interest, seeing how many of the persons have died since, and how many of the firms have been broken up by death or commercial misfortunes. I had the curiosity, two years ago, to ascertain how many of the members of the Literary and Philosophical Society survive after a period of twenty-seven years. In the list of members, in the society's memoirs, made out in March, 1848, the following are the only persons who were elected previous to the end of 1821 :

Samuel Kay, November 1, 1799.

John Kennedy, April 29, 1803.

James Ainsworth, January 25, 1805.

Peter Clare, F.R.A.S., April 27, 1810.

Laurence Buchan, November 2, 1810.

Gilbert Winter, November 2, 1810.

Rev. John Gooch Robberds, April 26, 1811.

Robert Stuart, January 21, 1814.

Sir Benjamin Heywood, Bart, F.R.S., January 27, 1815.

George Murray, January 27, 1815.

John Moore, F.L.S., January 27, 1815.

Robert Thorpe, November 3, 1815.

John Davies, M.W.S., November 1, 1816.

Robert Hyde Greg, F.G.S., January 24, 1817.

Joseph Cheeseborough Dyer, April 24, 1818.

Alexander Kay, October 30, 1818.

Richard Flint, October 30, 1818.

Archibald Prentice, January 22, 1819.

Eaton Hodgkinson, F.R.S., M.R.I.A., F.G.S., &c., Jan. 21, 1820.

Rev. John James Tayler, B.A., January 26, 1821.

John Blackwall, January 26, 1821.

Thomas Turner, F.R.C.S., April 19, 1821.

Joseph Jordan, October 19, 1821.

Richard Parr Bamber, October 19, 1821.

There were one hundred and sixty-nine members of the society in March, 1848, of whom one hundred and forty-five had been elected since 1821. Thus does one race disappear and another take its place. The attention of the society was directed more to physical than to moral or political science, and hence it escaped the risk which other associations, taking a wider and bolder range of subjects, encountered in 1794 and 1817. Its existence, from 1781, throughout a period peculiarly unfavourable for intellectual pursuits, had, no doubt, a beneficial influence on a portion of Manchester society, humanizing and refining, while, out of its circle, there was so much of mind-degrading intolerance. It may easily be imagined how much such men as Robert Hyde Greg, Joseph C. Dyer, and Alexander Kay would enjoy its *séances*, when political bigotry grievously embittered other associations. In this point of view the memory of the Henrys, the Percivals, and the Daltons, will be regarded with veneration, even without reference to their services in the advancement of science.

CHAPTER XV.

A SHORT PERIOD OF PLENTY.

HISTORY is generally a record of crime and suffering. The sword and the spear furnish more stirring descriptions than the ploughshare and the pruning-hook. The doings of a Bonaparte filled the post horns of all Europe ; the writings of a Bentham are read by only a very few philosophical philanthropists. The man who storms and fires a city is immortalised by the historian's pen ; he who enables a nation to earn its food by honest labour dies unnoticed, and to posterity, unknown. How briefly are periods of peace passed over in our oldest and most authentic record ! After the deliverance of Israel from a foreign yoke, effected under the direction of Deborah, the prophetess, we read :—“ And the land had rest forty years.” We read that Tolak “ judged Israel twenty and three years,” and that Jair “ judged Israel twenty and two years.” We hear no more of them ; they judged rightly ; *the people were at rest* ; no history of misdoings was needed. The history of eighty-five years of tranquillity, of peace, and, as we may presume, of plenty, is told in three lines. Would that the history of mankind were capable of such brief but precious record ! In our little narrow history-ground of Manchester we find, now and then, some such refreshing resting-places, some such green dew-bespangled fields in the thirsty waste. In thirty years of war and scarcity, hunger and nakedness, to three-fourths of the community, are three or four years of peace and plenty, nothing to the afflicted millions ? In so long a period of constantly deepening gloom, was a brief gleam of general sunshine nothing ? History was silent, but the people were fed. And they *thought* also,—those

briefly well-fed multitudes—calmly, but not less deeply, and their inquiry was:—"Why should it not always be thus?" Mr. Wheeler, in his history of Manchester, makes a great leap from Hunt's trial at York, in 1820, to the bank failures at the end of 1825, and the loom-breakings and factory-burnings of 1826. There lay a happy period some time between. One could then draw the curtains, and wheel round the sofa nearer to the cheerful fire, and the more enjoy the social meal, from the conviction that there was comfort also in the cottage, and no wailings in the street. It was worth something, on the Saturday night, to see the working man's wife need her husband's help to carry home the heavy basket, filled with bread and beef, and flour and suet. But then came the reflection that the corn-law was unrepealed, and that a single bad harvest might mar all this comfort.

Much outcry came from the landowners at the cheapness of provisions. The Saturday's basket of the operative was well filled, but the landlord's rents were not well paid. What cared the latter about the well-filled baskets, when their coffers wanted the supply which hitherto had been wrung out from the people by war prices? The loyalists of 1793 were not more horror-struck at the murder of Maria Antoinette than the soil-owners of 1822 were at the fall of wheat to forty shillings a quarter. They had expected that their law of 1815 would keep up the price to eighty shillings; and a profuse issue of paper money, accompanying scanty harvests, had kept up prices. In 1816, 1817, and 1818, deficient harvests occurred—that of the former being calculated as below the average to a greater extent than in any year since the period at the close of the previous century, and prices rose in consequence, so as to exceed the rate at which foreign corn might be admitted, and 2,600,000 quarters of wheat were imported in 1817 and 1818. The harvest of 1820 was supposed to be one-fourth beyond the average; that of 1821 was large, but of

inferior quality; and that of 1822 was again beyond the average, and was unusually early. In the week ending the 24th of December, 1822, the average prices were—wheat, 38s. 8d.; barley, 29s. 4d.; oats, 18s. 9d.; rye, 23s. 6d.; beans, 28s. 10d.; peas, 28s. 4d.; being 41s. 4d., 10s. 8d., 8s. 3d., 29s. 6d., 24s. 2d., 23s. 8d., lower than the scale which had been fixed upon, ostensibly for the protection of the farmer, but really for the protection of the landowner. The farmers did indeed now suffer, for during peace, and with a currency much enhanced in value, they were called upon to pay the rents which they had paid when they had war prices and a greatly depreciated currency. Many were the proposals made to relieve this “agricultural distress,” and parliament resolved to alleviate the pressure upon the “distressed landowners,” and that £1,000,000 should be advanced to them, in exchequer bills, when the average price of wheat was under sixty shillings. Great efforts were made to make the country believe that the agricultural labourers were in a most wretched condition in consequence of the low prices of corn; but it began then to be understood that the wages of farm labour never rose in proportion to the rise in the price of farm produce, and that, although they had fallen in 1822, the recipients were more than compensated by the low price of food.

Mr. Scarlett, Cobbett’s Lawyer Scarlett, availed himself of the cry of agricultural distress to introduce a bill so to *amend* the poor-laws as to prevent removals. He calculated on the support of the landowners, who, after having been released of the burden of supporting a portion of their poor, who had migrated to the manufacturing districts, might be supposed very willing to have a guarantee against their return to their native parishes. In justice to the landlords generally, and to the Tories of Manchester, it should be mentioned that they withheld their sanction from this scheme. It was manifestly unjust that the landlords, after taxing the manufacturing districts by the monopoly in the

supply of corn, should lay another tax upon them to relieve the poor who were born on their estates, and had been driven out, by insufficient wages, to seek employment in the manufacturing towns. When, twenty-four years after, the corn-laws were prospectively repealed, it was no more than just that labourers should find relief where they had given labour. Lawyer Scarlett had, besides, gone beyond the principle of his last-session Malthusian bill. He now made the effort to empower magistrates to *commit to prison* any person applying for relief, against whom any former "misconduct" could be proved. I had been forced by conviction, in spite of a very strong disinclination to take part in public meetings, to attend, in the previous year, one held in Salford, and to give my opposition to his then bill; and I felt it was my duty to attend one held in the collegiate church, in Manchester, on the 23rd of May, 1822, that I might protest against powers being granted to magistrates which might be used greatly to the oppression of the poor. I found that the opposition at this meeting was confined to the proposal that there should be no future removals. I told the meeting that a question of a legal provision for the poor had now become better understood than it had been lately; that it was acknowledged, generally, that poor laws were absolutely necessary in the existing state of the country; that Mr. Scarlett, however, notwithstanding his signal defeat last session, had introduced into his new bill a clause tending directly to overturn a law which, more than any other, had kept alive the moral and physical energies of the people. I then alluded to the clause empowering magistrates to imprison all such persons applying for relief as *they* (the justices) might deem to have been idle, extravagant, or to have misconducted themselves, and asked who could tell what was idleness or extravagance? Some persons thought the people were idle if they did not work more than twelve hours a day, and some that they

were extravagant if they ate any animal food. Was it right that persons so thinking should have the power to send a man to prison for what they might choose to call idleness or extravagance? But the bill also went to empower magistrates to commit for previous misconduct. Could any lawyer present say what misconduct meant? "If it were left to the discretion of a magistrate to decide," I said, "he might commit *any* man to prison. He might commit him to jail because, like me, he was a reformer, or a dissenter, or because he had attended a public meeting." My resolution was not opposed, but it underwent much verbal criticism: it was, however, ultimately passed unanimously in the following terms, *amended* by Mr. J. Garnett:—"That the power intended to be vested in justices of the peace to commit to the House of Correction individuals applying for relief on account of alleged idleness, extravagance, or misconduct, is not only vague and undefined in its terms, but also at variance with the spirit of the English laws." Looking back, at this distance of time, upon the proceedings of that meeting, and knowing that an expression of public opinion from loyal Manchester was not uninfluential in the legislature, I may be permitted to express my satisfaction that I did something to keep that opinion right on a question so deeply affecting the interests and liberties of the poorer classes; for many of my friends amongst the whigs, and some amongst the reformers, at that time, were more smitten with the Malthusian doctrines than my opponents, the tories; and it required some courage in me, not accustomed to take part in public meetings, to stand forward and defend the old beneficent law of Elizabeth, in opposition to the new lights of economical science. From this time I began to be strongly importuned to do something towards revivifying *Cowdroy's Gazette*; but I still retained faith in the politics of the *Guardian*, although I differed with it in political economy.

Ireland, the mass of its people considered, received little benefit by the abundance of corn food. Irishmen did not

eat wheaten bread, although they raised wheat. Their barley was consumed in the manufacture of whiskey, and even their oats were exported. Their only food was potatoes, and when they had no potatoes they had nothing. Owing to the heavy rains of the previous year, the potato crop of the south of Ireland had almost entirely failed, and the price of this staple food of the population was quadrupled. Before the end of April, 1822, the province of Munster was in a state of actual starvation. The people crowded into the towns in the vain hope of finding employment and food, and their sufferings were aggravated by the wide-spread typhus fever. General sympathy was excited in England, and a committee was formed in London, and corresponding committees in various parts of the kingdom, to originate subscriptions for the relief of Irish sufferers. Manchester was not behind other places in the benevolent effort. A public meeting was held on May 16th, and a large committee was appointed to solicit subscriptions. The following were some of the larger contributions;—

| | £. | s. | | £. | s. |
|----------------------------|----|----|----------------------------|----|----|
| Jones Loyd & Co. | 52 | 10 | Clogg, Norris, and Co. ... | 20 | 0 |
| Heywood, Brothers, & Co. | 52 | 10 | T. Blackwall and Co. | 20 | 0 |
| Birley and Hornby | 52 | 10 | Broadhurst, Marris, & Co. | 20 | 0 |
| S. Greg and Co. | 52 | 10 | Gardner and Harter | 21 | 0 |
| W. Grant and Brothers ... | 52 | 10 | Thomas Trueman | 20 | 0 |
| S. and T. Knight | 20 | 0 | T. and J. Binyon | 20 | 0 |
| J. Hardman | 20 | 0 | H. H. Birley | 15 | 0 |
| Daintry, Royle, & Co. ... | 21 | 0 | Bunten and Co. | 15 | 0 |
| Thomas Johnson | 21 | 0 | T. Houldsworth, M.P. ... | 25 | 0 |
| Warden and four Fellows | 60 | 0 | T. J. and J. Ashton | 20 | 0 |
| J. and R. Barton | 52 | 10 | Jackson, Rushworth, & Co. | 15 | 0 |
| M'Connel and Kennedy... | 52 | 10 | S. and T. Ashton | 21 | 0 |
| W. Douglas and Co | 31 | 10 | J. and T. Ramsbottom ... | 21 | 0 |
| E. Hobson Hope | 31 | 10 | Robert Philips | 20 | 0 |
| Thos. & Richard Potter ... | 31 | 10 | T. and M. Pickford & Co. | 20 | 0 |
| Thomas Worthington ... | 20 | 0 | J. and W. Touchet | 21 | 0 |
| James Brierley | 20 | 0 | W. Rigby | 20 | 0 |
| T. and B. Parker | 21 | 0 | R. Slack | 20 | 0 |
| Bradshaw, Wanklyn, & Co. | 21 | 0 | T. and J. Todd | 20 | 0 |

These are smaller sums than such houses now contribute in cases of emergency ; but very active exertions were made to obtain subscriptions from all ranks of the community, and the amount raised in Manchester exceeded £4500. Let me again say of the men who were the opponents of reform, that their practical benevolence was strongly manifested on this pressing occasion.

The "Bridge-street Gang" were at this time in active operation. In April, 1821, they preferred bills, at the Middlesex sessions, against Wardell, editor of the *Statesman*, Thelwal, editor of the *Champion*, Dolby, publisher of the *Political Dictionary*, and Mary Ann Carlile, for seditious libels. They had assumed the name of the Constitutional Association, and the functions of the law officers of the crown, and were supported by the contributions of the excessively loyal throughout the kingdom, including many in Manchester. In the autumn of 1821, a poor man, named Ridgeway, a bookseller in this town, was convicted of selling a libellous publication to a man named Mellor, a spy, or "informer," employed by the "gang," and their sole witness. The evidence of this fellow having been shaken by the testimony of Ridgeway and some of his neighbours, and a motion having been made for a new trial, the "gang" considered it necessary to strengthen his testimony, and a few counter affidavits having been procured, the question became one of conflicting evidence. The King's Bench decided against Ridgeway's application. Murray, the attorney of the "gang," determined to put Ridgeway effectually down, attended at the Lancaster spring assizes, 1822, and presented an indictment of perjury against him, which, upon the evidence of Mellor and others, was found. Poor Ridgeway was then in prison, his wife and four children were dependent upon charity for their subsistence, and he had not a shilling to defend himself. But he found friends amongst the reformers of Manchester—Richard Potter's "small but firm band." His case was investigated, evidence

was examined, and it was found that there were about a score of witnesses, of unimpeachable character, ready to testify to the truth of his statement. These witnesses were sent to Lancaster on Saturday, the 24th of August, and were in waiting there until the following Wednesday, when the case was called—and *put off*, on an affidavit from Mr. Murray, the “gang’s” solicitor, that a material witness could not be able to attend until next day. Next day came, the witness was present, and the trial was about to begin, when the clerk of the crown informed his lordship that there was a *certiorari* to remove the case into the King’s Bench !

Mr. Baron Wood.—Then of course I cannot proceed with it.

Mr. Sergeant Hullock.—*That is the object*, my lord ; we are not quite ready.

Mr. Brougham.—Your lordship will see the hardship of this proceeding is, that the poor defendant will be compelled to bring his twenty witnesses again, at an expense which he cannot afford.

Mr. Baron Wood.—I cannot help that, Mr. Brougham ; I have no power. It may be a defect in the law.

Mr. Brougham.—Yes, my lord, and there are always persons (looking at Mr. Murray) ready to avail themselves of defects in the law, for the purpose of oppressing an individual. Then, my lord, there is another hardship on the poor defendant. He is now in confinement in this jail for a misdemeanour, and I suppose there will be an attempt to keep him in prison after the expiration of his term of imprisonment, until the next assizes. If your lordship could make an order that he should be admitted to bail at Manchester, where he could have no difficulty in procuring bail—

Mr. Baron Wood.—I have no power to do that, Mr. Brougham.

And so the business terminated. Fortunately for Ridgeway, the material witness” himself was in prison before his testimony was needed ; and so the prosecution failed. The “gang” gained nothing by it but a great addition to the odium they had previously incurred.

In November of this year the members of the yeomanry corps presented Mr. Hugh Birley, their commander, with a sword, as a testimony of their respect. The *Guardian*, in

commenting on the presentation, said: "Whether, however, we are to be classed with the 'designing or the deceived,' 'the ignorant or the ill-disposed,' we have no hesitation in avowing our firm and *unchangeable* opinion, that the strongest censures which have been applied to the magistrates and yeomanry, for their conduct on the 16th of August, are not stronger than they deserve; and that the sanction of all the special juries, and of *all the judges in the kingdom*, would be quite insufficient to wash out the 'damned spot' of blood with which that event has tainted them." Yet, notwithstanding this declaration of unchangeable opinion, notwithstanding the stain of this "damned spot," ten years had not elapsed ere the editor of the *Guardian* went, hand-in-hand and arm-in-arm, with Mr. H. H. Birley, in the attempt to impose a member of Mr. Birley's choice upon newly enfranchised Manchester! Let no man talk of an unchangeable opinion whose opinion is founded on present expediency.

A trial in 1823, arising out of the strong feeling which prevailed against the issue of local bank notes, on the part, as subsequent disastrous failures proved, of persons whose "promise to pay" was valueless, excited a considerable amount of interest in Lancashire. An attorney in Manchester, John Dias—a name which afterwards became noted or notorious in consequence of numerous actions for libel against the London press—had been committed for two years to Lancaster Castle, for conspiring with a bankrupt to defraud his creditors. This had somewhat damaged his character in Manchester, and he had subsequently to leave the town to avoid a distrait for poor-rates. This man, thus banishing himself, was not exactly the sort of person to commence the business of a banker and to issue notes, but he had formed a connection with a Mr. Williams, in Holywell, Flintshire, and in 1821 they commenced banking, and the manufacture of local paper which had some currency in Wales. Some of their notes having found their

way to Manchester, notwithstanding the resolution of its merchants, manufacturers, and shopkeepers to discourage the circulation of such "rags," the *Guardian*, in a long article against the pouring of the paper "rubbish into the once pure stream of Manchester circulation," gave expression to the following "broad hints":—

"To such an extent do the people of Manchester actually go in this folly—in this madness—that we *ourselves* saw, a few days since, notes payable at a place in Wales, which had been issued by two vagabonds, one of whom was formerly a pettifogger in this town, who, after two years' imprisonment for *conspiring with a bankrupt to defraud his creditors*—after being consequently shunned by all decent men—after making from his last residence here a moonlight flit to avoid a distraint for poor rates, which he had appealed against on the ground of *poverty*—went *immediately*, in conjunction with the other wretch, to commence banking, and is now beginning to avenge himself for the treatment he experienced here, by indirectly drawing away our solid valuables, in exchange for his dirty rags, which present no security but *his* or his partner's *integrity* and *wealth*."

Something else was said about a *prison bird* and *confessed pauper*. A notice of action was served against the *Guardian*, and much speculation took place as to the result. Few found fault with the exposure, but there was no doubt that a libel had been published. No names were mentioned; no name of a town; no name even of a county was given. Would Dicas prove that the libel applied to him by proving that he was the only Manchester attorney who had been two years imprisoned for fraud? He did so. On the trial at Shrewsbury, a former clerk of Dicas proved that Dicas had been convicted of conspiracy, in issuing a fraudulent commission of bankruptcy against a person of the name of Bulwer;—he knew it because he was in court when the case was tried. This was evidence that the allusion was to Dicas, and it followed that the application of the term "wretch" was to Mr. Dicas's partner. To prove special damages, a clerk in the bank was examined, who said that

about £1,900 in one-pound notes had been in circulation, and that, in consequence of what had been said in the *Guardian*, notes were sent in to the bank for payment to the amount of £1,000 in six weeks, and that no sooner were they re-issued than they were sent in again. This was indeed a dreadful *run*—a run which, *in six weeks*, brought back the large amount of £1,000. The damages were laid at £5,000; the verdict of the jury was for £10. Probably, had not the partner, who had not run away, and had not been imprisoned, been called a wretch, the verdict would have been for a farthing. The costs, amounting to several hundred pounds, fell on the *Guardian*; but the greater part of the money was repaid by a subscription, and the paper had the advantage, from that time, of being considered as the guardian of the commercial interests of the town and neighbourhood—a reputation much more valuable, in a pecuniary point of view, than the fame of being the advocate of popular rights.

Very considerable interest was excited by another trial this year by an attempt to murder an extensive manufacturer at Preston. On the morning of Sunday, July 27th, as Mr. Horrocks was returning from church, and was opening the gate of his partner, Mr. Miller, a man named Ryding came behind and gave him a blow with a heavy kitchen cleaver, which cut through the hat and inflicted a frightful wound on the head. Mr. Horrocks turned round in time to avert a second blow aimed at the head, and to receive it and successive blows on the arm, which received several severe cuts. Mr. Horrocks' cries of murder brought assistance, and the man was taken into custody, without making any effort to escape. There had been a period of tranquillity, and comparative prosperity to the working classes. This attempt at assassination in broad daylight, especially when it became known, from the prisoner's own declaration, that he had been the writer of an anonymous letter, threatening Mr. Horrocks with death, unless he

raised the wages of his spinners, gave great alarm, for it was believed to be the result of a conspiracy amongst the operatives to effect their objects by the murder of masters who resisted their demands. Such an atrocity gave the more alarm, occurring at a time when the working classes were enjoying more than usual comforts. There were many circumstances, however, which had soured the temper of the operatives, and rendered them hostile to their employers. Their efforts to obtain reform in parliament had exposed them to the yeoman's sword and the constable's staff. Many had their wages paid in "truck," instead of the current coin of the realm. The combination laws rendered them liable to imprisonment if they jointly attempted, no matter how peaceable the means, to raise wages, or to resist reduction of wages. There was a law, also, to prevent their emigration to other countries, where there was a better demand for their labour; and there was a law to impose heavy duties on food imported for their consumption. Their masters generally were opposed to reform, and firm supporters of the combination laws. Many of them profited largely by the truck system; most were opposed to emigration, in the fear that they would lose their best hands; and few amongst them had the courage or inclination to protest against the impoverishing bread tax. It was not surprising that they were regarded as the enemies of the working classes—not surprising that an occasional unavoidable reduction of wages should be attributed to their grasping cupidity. Ryding, a young man of twenty-two years of age, had been afflicted with a disease in the brain, which made him exceedingly desponding at times, and at other brief times almost delirious, but did not seem otherwise to affect his intellect. Hearing continually of the oppression exercised by the masters, this lad determined to avenge the wrongs of his class. He considered Horrocks and Miller to be the principal movers in a reduction of wages. It occurred to him, one night in bed, that it was his duty to

shoot them. He awoke several times in the night, and the same idea always presented itself. It became his day-dream, and he became unfit for his work, and was always discharged afterwards from every situation he obtained. FATE seemed to be impelling him onwards. It was necessary, he thought, that the nation should know what oppressors the masters at Preston were. The conviction, under the combination laws, of some operative spinners in that town, gave a further stimulus to action. He would not kill—his mind seems to have ultimately revolted against that—but he would inflict grievous wounds, that he himself might be tried for life, and that by his trial and death he might rouse the country to a redress of the wrongs under which he and his class were suffering! The jury returned a verdict of not guilty, on the ground of insanity, and the victim of strangely perverted heroism was lost sight of in the recesses of a prison, in which he was to be shut up during his majesty's pleasure.

In the brief periods of comparative commercial prosperity, amidst the innumerable wild schemes of speculation which start up, there has been usually, in Manchester, the origination of some publicly useful institution, which stands as a mark that all was not madness at the period. On the 1st of October, 1823, a meeting was held at the Exchange, Dr. Davenport Hulme in the chair, to consider the propriety of establishing an institution for the promotion of literature, science, and the fine arts. The principal speaker was Mr. George William Wood, but the following gentlemen took a part in the proceedings by moving and seconding the twenty-two resolutions:—

1. George William Wood—Robert Hindley.
2. Thomas Hardman—Robert Christie.
3. Thomas Ainsworth—Jonathan Dawson.
4. David Holt—J. A. Ransome.
5. William Garnett—Thomas Sharp.
6. G. W. Wood—G. T. Bury.
7. R. H. Greg—Joseph Birley.

8. William Townend—David Holt.
9. Samuel Kay—Charles Brandt.
10. Thomas Hoyle—Samuel Kay.
11. Charles Brandt—Beresford Turner.
12. Robert Philips—S. Barton.
13. Henry Hardie, M.D.—Dr. Lyon.
14. James Beardoc—George Hole.
15. J. A. Ransome—John Macfarlane.
16. E. J. Loyd—Joseph Birley.
17. Thomas Ainsworth—E. J. Loyd.
18. Thomas Sharp—David Holt.
19. James H. Heron—S. Barton.
20. G. W. Wood—Thomas Ainsworth.
21. David Holt—Thomas Ainsworth.
22. Charles Greenway—Thomas Sharp.

The subscriptions amounted, before the end of the year, to upwards of £14,000, and being continued into the prosperous year 1824, the Royal Institution was founded, which, though not so extensively useful as it might have been, and may still be, under more energetic and more popular government, is highly creditable to the period when it was established.

CHAPTER XVI.

PURCHASE OF "COWDROY'S GAZETTE."

IN a preceding chapter some account was given of the establishment of the *Guardian*. In describing the development of public opinion in this metropolis of the northern provinces, it seemed necessary to notice the origin of a journal which became the organ of whiggism, from its resurrection, after the horrors of the French Revolution had been forgotten, until its decadence, when the people began to believe that they had about as much interest in the quarrels between the whig and tory factions as in those between the rival houses of Montagu and Capulet. There was a great leap to be taken to bring toryism up to a rational radicalism. Whiggery was a convenient middle stepping-stone, broad enough for men to stand upon, and sneer at the tardy fools behind, and the too-fast fools before. The *Guardian*, after a two years' experience of the difficulty of progression, took up its position half-way, rather disposed to wait for the coming up of those who were in the rear, than to march forward and join those who were in advance. Throughout the whole of its third year it would have been difficult for any one reading its columns to discover the hand of a reformer. And yet it would have been difficult to point out any departure from the promises set forth in its prospectus, so vaguely had they been expressed. Had any one said: "Here are no reform principles," the reply would have been: "Look here—here are two lines expressing a doubt that the House of Commons fully represents the people. You say there is no fruit in the orchard. Look here. Don't you see a pear at the top of that branch, behind

those leaves?" The paper had not abandoned its principles—it had only ceased to give them earnest expression.

Considerable dissatisfaction was expressed by some of the gentlemen who had been most instrumental in establishing the journal, expecting that it would be a bold and uncompromising exponent of political truth and progress; and I was often advised to purchase *Cowdroy's Gazette*, and offered assistance if I found that it required more capital than I could command. The circumstances of the times, as well as my own desire to contribute something to the formation of a right public opinion, induced me to think favourably of the proposition. On the foundation of a healthy state of trade, a superstructure of false confidence had been raised. The spirit of rash speculation prevailed, and I plainly perceived that a panic would follow. I foresaw that the house, from the sale of whose goods I derived two-thirds of my income, would not be able to stand, should there come, as I was certain there would come, a sudden depression of trade, with failures, great reduction of prices, and an extraordinary limitation of discounts. If it was imprudent to enter into a new business, it was imprudent to wait in one upon which a fearful crash was sure to come. I made the purchase of copyright and materials; paid £800 down, and engaged to pay Mrs. Cowdroy £100 a year for eight years; laid out £300 more on a new press and a new fount of type; and thus I commenced a new career, full of health and hope. Mrs. Cowdroy had derived a living from the paper, though a scanty one. The whole wages of compositors and pressmen amounted to only seven pounds a week. I should have to increase the expenditure; but an increase of the circulation, which was 1,000 a week, to 1,500, and of the advertisements in the same proportion, would, I expected, meet the extra outlay.

I had full faith that the principles I held would, ultimately, be those held by the great majority of the people inhabiting Manchester and its populous neighbourhood.

There needed to be, in my firm belief, only earnest and frequent appeals to common sense, common humanity, and common justice, to effect great and beneficial changes. I could not suppose that masters would long ask for liberty to combine, while workmen were liable to imprisonment for a peaceful agreement among themselves, as to what wages they would accept; that a mercantile and manufacturing community would long quietly submit to a law which limited their trade, and laid a grievous tax upon the people's food; that there would be a continual insult to Dissenters, by their exclusion from corporate offices; that Roman Catholics would be long bitterly insulted and deeply wronged, by being excluded from all share in the representation of the country; that the inhabitants of Manchester would long submit to the dictation of a petty officer of the Lord of the Manor; that Manchester and Salford, with 200,000 inhabitants, would long remain unrepresented, while one hundred boroughs, whose united population amounted only to that number, continued to send two hundred members to parliament; or that, in demanding freedom ourselves, we could deny it to the hundreds of thousands who were enduring the galling yoke of slavery in our colonies. I had full faith that these changes might be effected, and some belief that I might aid in effecting them. Goëthe has said: "Our wishes are presentiments of the capabilities which lie within us, are harbingers of that we shall be able to perform. Whatever we are able and would like to do presents itself to our imagination, as without us and in the future; we feel a longing after that which we already possess in secret. Thus *a passionate anticipating grasp changes the truly possible into a dreamed reality.*" In commencing my career as a journalist, I KNEW that the principles I advocated would ultimately be triumphant—KNEW it as certainly as if the chart of futurity lay open before me. It might not be in my time as a journalist—not in my time as a man—but "come it would

for all that ;” and that conviction sustained me throughout all subsequent difficulties—difficulties which would have driven many a man mad. I felt that the existence of a thoroughly independent paper for only a few years would create a *demand* for its continuance ; I might fail—I might die—the principles, once fairly enunciated, could neither fail nor die. Much that I anticipated has been done ; I had some share, however humble, in the doing ; and the paper, renovated in June, 1824, and carried on for a quarter of a century, as the *Manchester Gazette*, the *Manchester Times and Gazette*, and the *Manchester Examiner and Times*, is now not only at the head of the Manchester press, but at the head of the provincial press of the United Kingdom. I knew that the exponent and organ of progression would reach this rank ; I always said it would—said so when I was laughed at for the saying. The time ? It is not for man to fix a time ; he must work to accelerate the period—must have faith that “ the brave time is coming.” All my rejoicing at things done was not reserved till they were done. I knew that they would be done, and rejoiced while they were doing. Much is yet to do—much there will always be to do, for the cultivated field will go back to barrenness if it be left alone ; but as the work is wanted men will be found to do it. Rough pioneers have gone before and cleared away many of the most formidable obstructions. Cultivation must follow the clearing of the forest and jungle.

About the beginning of 1824, three gentlemen, Mr. William Fairbairn, Mr. Thomas Hopkins, and Mr. Richard Roberts, conversing on the proposal to establish an institution (now the Royal Institution) for the promotion of literature and the fine arts, thought it would be well that another should be established to teach the application of science to mechanical and manufacturing art, for the benefit of young men who needed practical instruction and had not the means to obtain it, unless offered to them at a

cheap rate. They each agreed to contribute ten pounds, and to endeavour to induce others to follow their example. A public meeting was held on the 17th of April, at the Bridgewater Arms, in High-street, Benjamin Heywood, Esq., in the chair, in which it was resolved that an institution, to be called the Manchester Mechanics' Institution, should be formed, the leading objects of which should be the delivery of lectures on the various sciences and their application to the arts, and the establishment of a suitable library for reference and circulation. Mr. Heywood subscribed twenty guineas, and the following gentlemen ten guineas each :—

| | | |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Joseph Birley, | Phillips and Lee, | T. and M. Marsland, |
| John M'Farlane, | G. W. Wood, | Henry Gore, |
| John Pooley, | Thomas Appleby, | B. A. Heywood, |
| James Oocleston, | C. Greenway, | Joseph Frith, |
| Lawrence Buchan, | Robert Seddon, | Thomas Hopkins, |
| Charles Ker, | Grant and Brothers, | Robert Philips, |
| Thomas Hoyle, | Dr. Henry, | J. C. Dyer, |
| John Kennedy, | John Royle, | H. Houldsworth, |
| W. Jenkinson, | Richard Roberts, | W. Marsden, |
| W. Williams, | J. L. Bradbury, | Jonathan Cocker, |
| S. R. Brooks, | Robert Christie, | Saml. Greg and Co., |
| James Lillie, | Thomas Sharp, | P. Novelli, |
| T. Houldsworth, M.P. | James M'Connel, | Thomas Bury, |
| W. Crighton, | W. Fairbairn, | S. M. Moore, |
| James Murray, | Peter Taylor, | Joseph Brotherton. |

Such was the commencement of an institution which, after being subject to many vicissitudes, has become one of the most popular and most useful of its class, combining the diffusion of very valuable and solid information with the promotion of rational and refining recreation, at the cheapest possible rate.

The establishment of the Mechanics' Institution, subscriptions to the amount of £26,000 towards erecting the Royal Institution, and of £5,000 towards the enlargement of the Infirmary, together with a generous contribution

for the relief of sufferers by great inundations in Germany, were some of the results of the prosperous year 1824. Manchester had not yet participated much in the rash spirit of speculation which was exhibited in London. It had mainly manifested itself here in the purchase of the raw material in the staple article of manufacture; but the speculations in cotton were kept considerably in check by a series of able articles in the *Guardian*, written by a gentleman of great experience in that trade, who exposed the various devices made use of to raise prices. At the close of the year, however, some symptoms were exhibited here of the tendency to enter upon great joint-stock speculations. The first impulse to the share mania in London seems to have been given by the intention of ministers to recognise the independence of the South American States having transpired. The avidity for shares in the mines may be shown by comparing the prices in five of the principal companies at two periods, only a month apart:—

| | Dec. 10, 1824. | | | Jan. 11, 1825. |
|----------------------|----------------|----|-----------|----------------|
| | £ | s. | | £. |
| Anglo-Mexican | 33 | 0 | prem..... | 158 |
| Brazilian | 0 | 10 | dis..... | 66 |
| Columbia | 19 | 0 | prem..... | 82 |
| Real del Monte | 550 | 0 | „ | 1,350 |
| United Mexican | 35 | 0 | „ | 1,550 |

It was computed that in the end of 1824, and the beginning of 1825, 276 companies had been projected, with a proposed capital of £174,000,000! Of these 33 were for canals and docks, 48 for railroads, 42 for gas, 34 for metal mines, 20 for insurances, 23 for banking, 12 for navigation and packets. A man, in haste to become rich, had no more to do than put down his name for shares, pay a few pounds for his scrip, sell at a high premium, and repeat the process. As John Knox said, when he saw the splendour of Queen Mary's court at Holyrood, "Ah, ladies, it is a brave world this—if it would but last." We shall

hear by and by of the bubble bursting; and, all the teachings of experience being thrown away, of fresh bubbles being blown, to burst in their turn.

At the opening of the parliamentary session, February 2nd, 1826, the contentment and the thriving condition of all classes of the people was the most remarkable topic in the royal speech. There were some symptoms, however, that the prosperity was not to be of very long duration. In the general confidence money was so easily obtained, that speculation was carried to a considerable height, and fears began to be entertained by those who had been accustomed to mark the causes of commercial fluctuation, that a considerable depression would follow. The abundant harvest of 1822 had, for some time, counteracted the mischievous operation of the corn law, but advancing prices convinced all who had given any thought to the subject, that there was great danger to be apprehended whenever the crops should yield less than a good average. In 1825 a movement was made in Manchester, not for the repeal, but for the revision of the law. In its increased vigour it had existed ten years, and consequently had become "venerable." It had been an "innovation" ten years before; it had now become an "establishment;" to abolish it would have been a "revolution." The movement had no energy in it—carried no hearty sympathies with it. Mr. William Garnett, afterwards an unsuccessful candidate for the representation of Salford, was the principal speaker. It was a sensible speech enough for a merchant, on a mere question of exchanges. There was no allusion to the semi-starvation of millions when a scanty harvest came; agriculture would flourish when trade flourished; prohibitory duties provoked retaliatory duties on the part of other nations; America might become a formidable manufacturing rival; therefore it was desirable that the law should be revised. It was a sensible speech enough, but without life or soul—dry as a remainder biscuit after a long voyage.

One resolution, moved by Mr. John Edward Taylor, seconded by Mr. Frederick Lilly, a corn merchant, was as follows :—

“That permanently high prices of corn would be evidently and generally injurious : they would either greatly depreciate the condition of our manufacturing population, or, by *raising the wages of labour*, materially increase the facilities for successful rivalry with our productive industry abroad ; and the declining condition of our trade, which would then ensue, would eventually entail on the agriculturists, in common with every other class of the community, the greatest suffering.”

There was here a repetition of the fallacy on which the elder Sir Robert Peel and the other manufacturers of Manchester, had opposed the bill of 1815—a fallacy which, being thus sanctioned by Manchester, was repeated by the landlord class throughout all the subsequent struggle for free trade ; and their constant taunt to the manufacturing class was, that they were afraid of high prices of food, only because they were afraid that they would pay a higher rate of wages. The meeting was, however, memorable, inasmuch as it was the first held by merchants and manufacturers, after the working classes had been driven out of the field of agitation for free trade and free representation. It was a small movement in the right direction, and our gratitude to the movers is not to be withheld, because they elung to one or two old fallacies. The fault was with the mercantile and manufacturing public generally, who believed that the then prosperity was to be lasting.

The Catholic Association, under the energetic leadership of Daniel O’Connell, had made itself formidable to the ministry, and it had become obvious that, ere long, there would be a majority of the members of the House of Commons in favour of the removal of Catholic disabilities. Emancipation encountered a bigoted and intolerant opposition ; the cry of “No popery !” resounded throughout the land, and many men believed that the days of the

bloody Mary would be revived if a few Romanists obtained admission into the legislature. Be it noted, however, that there were not a few reformers, and not a few sincere friends of religious liberty, who had some difficulty in giving in their adhesion to the cause, seeing the terms on which some of the leading Catholics were willing to purchase eligibility to seats in either house of parliament. These leaders were willing to buy their own enfranchisement by the sacrifice of the electoral rights of the forty-shilling freeholders in Ireland; and, to give an assurance that they would be peaceable subjects, they were ready to submit to the degradation of having their priests made paid pensioners of the state. In a letter to the Catholic Association, read at one of its meetings, in March (the last which was held, in consequence of an act for its dissolution), Mr. O'Connell said:—

“Although a provision for our clergy is spoken of, it certainly has not been spoken of in any shape which could excite the least alarm in the mind of the most scrupulous Catholic; and, as to the principle of that measure, is there any one who imagines that the Catholic people of Ireland can be finally admitted into the condition of subjects, so as to constitute a portion of the universal British nation, *without our clergy having a natural and just claim on the state for a provision?* If there be, *I am not of their opinion.* I own I think that our clergy ought to receive a support from that state which we, the Catholics, contribute to maintain with our moneys and our blood; and as to the details of that provision, are they not safe in the hands of our excellent prelates, subject also as they must be to the inspection of all the people, Protestant and Catholic of the empire, before they can be finally adopted or made into a law?”

Mr. O'Connell afterwards changed his opinions with regard to the endowment of the Catholic priests. Before his death he declared his strong opposition to the endowment of any religious sect; and he denounced every proposal to endow the priests of his own faith, as an attempt to make them the miserable slaves of the state. But he would have permitted them to accept the insidious

bribe in 1825. *Then* it was "safe in the hands of excellent prelates." While, therefore, we notice, with indignation, the intolerance and bigotry which would have excluded men from seats in parliament on account of their conscientious religious opinions, let it be recollected that there were not a few undoubted friends of religious liberty, who were not willing that emancipation should be had, accompanied by an agreed-to condition which was as much at variance with principle as was the exclusion of the Catholics from the legislature. The payment of the Catholic priests was to have been one "wing" of the Catholic Emancipation Bill—the disfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders was to have been another. Mr. O'Connell, in the letter which we have already quoted, said, in reference to this proposed wholesale disfranchisement:—

"Let me ask, will not the stimulus to *make* freeholders exist after emancipation as powerfully as at present? It certainly will; and, if it do exist, is it robbing the poor to make a law which shall compel any landlord who wishes to make 40s. freeholders to make to each a lease for one life, at a rent which makes the qualification merely nominal, and puts the *freeholder* completely in the power of the landlord? Would it be robbing the poor if the landlords, instead of giving a 40s. freehold, gave a freehold of £10 annual value? Let us recollect that the landlords will, after the measure, want £10 freeholders as they now want 40s. freeholders. *They may, perhaps, not make so many of the one as of the other*; but every £10 freeholder would be a *comfortable* person. Who will say that the 40s. freeholders are so?"

After reading this sophisticated defence of a sweeping measure of unjust disfranchisement, the association passed a unanimous vote, declaring, in the strongest terms its "undiminished and undivided confidence in Mr. O'Connell." Are we to be surprised then that there were many staunch reformers who hesitated in giving in their adhesion to a cause, the success of which was to be gained by such abandonment of all the principles of reform?

I do not absolve from the charge of bigotry and intolerance a party of men in Manchester who bitterly opposed themselves to Catholic Emancipation. They had no objections to endowment—if they had all the endowment to their own church; they had no objection to sweeping disfranchisement—they would gladly have added the English forty-shilling freeholds to the Irish, and swept them away all together. Neither reformers nor friends of religious liberty, they were actuated only by a deep hatred and a frantic fear of the “papists.” An honest hatred and a real fear no doubt—a kind of protestantism run mad, and therefore about as much to be pitied as condemned. The same class of persons, thirty years earlier, would have pulled down Presbyterian chapels, and thought they did God service. In March, Sir Francis Burdett’s resolutions for the relief of the Irish Catholics were carried in the House of Commons by a majority of 247 to 234. The ultra Protestants of Manchester came to the rescue of the “constitution,” and at a meeting convened by private circular, and held privately on the 22nd of April, they passed strong resolutions against any further concessions to the papists. The petitions founded on these resolutions were sent on the Saturday and Sunday to the ministers of the Methodist, Independent, and Baptist denominations, with notes requesting that they would allow the sheets to be sent to their chapels for the purpose of receiving the signatures of their congregations. The Independent and Baptist ministers, without concert, declined to allow the petitions to be received in their chapels. The Unitarian ministers were not asked for their co-operation. On the 25th of April, the Duke of York, who was a bishop as well as a general, strengthened by the movement in Manchester and other towns, made his famous declaration, immediately *printed in gold*, and sent to all parts of the kingdom. “Twenty years,” he said, “had elapsed since the subject was first launched; its agitation had been

the source of the illness which had clouded the last ten years of his father's life ; and, to the last moment of his existence, he would adhere to his principles,—so help him God !”

The friends of civil and religious liberty, not frightened at the declaration, on oath, of the pious prince and bishop, resolved that a public meeting should be held to counteract any effect that might have been produced by the resolutions passed in private, but paraded as if they had emanated from the inhabitants of Manchester. The meeting, convened by the boroughreeve, was held on the 5th of May, in the Manor Court Room, which was excessively crowded on the occasion. Mr. John Douglas moved the first resolution, which was seconded by Mr. George W. Wood, who, in the course of his speech, animadverted very strongly on the proceedings of the hole-and-corner meeting which had previously been held. This called up Mr. Benjamin Braidley, afterwards boroughreeve, and a candidate for the representation of Manchester, who, certainly with great boldness, defended the private meeting, and moved that the discussion of the question in a place which could hold so few of the Protestants of the town was not expedient, and would give rise to unpleasant feelings. Mr. John Shuttleworth made an able and a cutting reply. At this stage of the proceedings, a man in a fustian jacket, who was recognised as an operative cotton spinner, named Jonathan Hodgins, who had previously taken part in some meetings against the combination laws, modestly stood forward and inquired if a working man might be permitted to address the meeting. Of course he was permitted, and by his plain and unpretending manner, his sound sense, and his not unfelicitous expression, soon rivetted the attention of the meeting. His speech is worth recording, as amongst the first delivered by a working man, taking his place amongst able speakers, who held high commercial rank in the community :—

"I come forward with the view of arguing the question now before the meeting, with working men like myself, of whom I see a good many here. I know that there are gentlemen present, of great eloquence, and much better qualified than I am to diseuss this question; but then their eloquence is not always convineing to the working man's mind, because it is frequently above his comprehension; it is a dish of fish that he does not understand. (A laugh.) Now I, who am a working man myself, have paid some attention to this subject, and having formed certain opinions upon it, I now come forward to deliver those opinions to my fellow-workmen. In the first place, I beg to make a few observations on the speech of the gentleman who spoke the last but one (Mr. Braidley.) I cannot help thinking that he wishes rather to inflame our passions than to speak to our understandings. I am no Catholic myself, and have no passions on this subject to be inflamed; but I think it would be better if we were all to confine our observations to the measure now before parliament, and not wander into long discussions about transubstantiation, and other matters which we none of us understand. (Cheers.) With the arguments which the gentleman founded on what the Catholics have done in former times, we have really nothing at all to do. (Cheers.) What was done we cannot tell with any degree of certainty; for a great number of charges which are made by the one side are positively denied by the other; and which speaks the truth we have no means of knowing. But of one thing we are tolerably certain; for it is proved by impartial historians of all parties, that, at all times and seasons, both Protestants and Catholics have gone to extremes and extravagances—(loud cheers); and as all parties have been guilty, it would be the extreme of injustice to inflict punishment on the hundredth generation of the Catholics for what was done by their forefathers. (Loud cheers.) One argument which has been used against Catholic emancipation, amongst that class of persons to whom I belong, and to which I now address myself, is that they have the same chance of becoming members of parliament as other people, if they would conform to the same opinions: but do you not see this sort of argument would go to justify every sort of tyranny? It would justify Ferdinand and the inquisition in Spain. If a Spanish Protestant were to complain that he was excluded from civil rights, he might then be answered by some Roman Catholic,—'You have only to do as we do; become a Catholic, and you will be entitled to the same privileges with us.' (Cheers.) This was something like the legislature passing a law that all men with wooden legs should be

hanged; if a person who had the misfortune to be in that condition should complain of the law, on the principle I have alluded to, a man who had both his legs might say to him, 'It is the same for one as another; you have the same chance as I have; for if I had a wooden leg I must be hanged too.' (Cheers and laughter.) It would seem that the Catholics can get all they want in the easiest manner imaginable; for they have only to take an oath to be admitted to the same privileges as Protestants. Now, as the gentlemen say they care nothing about oaths, and can break an oath at any time, why need they bother about emancipation? (Tremendous cheering.) I now beg to make a few observations on what Mr. Peel said on this subject in the House of Commons, if a working man like myself may be allowed to comment on the speech of a minister of state; and I would here observe, that I do not find fault with Mr. Peel for opposing Catholic emancipation. If he honestly thinks it would be dangerous, he does right to oppose it to the utmost of his power. I think it would not be dangerous, and therefore do not oppose it. I think the opposition to it arises from unfounded prejudices; but I hope the time will come, and before long, when even the prejudices of Mr. Peel will disappear, and when Catholics and Protestants shall take each other by the hand, and bury their discords and animosities in oblivion. (Loud cheers.) Mr. Peel, in his last speech, drew an argument from what has been recently going on in France. It seems they have passed some sort of a severe law in that country, about what they call sacrilege; and Mr. Peel maintained that on that account we ought not to emancipate the Catholics. But if the French are illiberal, I do not see why we should become tyrants. (Cheers.) There are in this country a many Catholics, and a great many Protestants. 'Let us all consult each other's interests, and cultivate each other's good will. (Cheers.) Let us live together as one people; and let foreign nations, if they will, pursue tyranny, till tyranny pursues them.' (Loud cheers.)

The original resolutions were carried by a great majority, although two or three speakers, with much fury of utterance and much frantic gesticulation, attempted to convince the meeting that the liberties of the people would be destroyed if any Catholic was allowed to take a seat in either house of parliament. The time for emancipation had not come. On the 17th of May the Catholic Relief Bill was

rejected in the Lords by a majority of 178 against 130. The bill for disfranchising the forty-shilling freeholders was withdrawn.

At the time when the meeting in favour of catholic emancipation was held in the Manor Court Room, it appeared to me that there was such an equality in the numbers in Manchester of those who were favourable and those who were opposed, that nothing short of actual enumeration could have decided which was in the majority. There were many, however, who, so far as any public manifestation went, might be supposed to be neuter, but who, if canvassed, would have given their suffrage in favour of the abolition of all those exclusive statutes which were in force against those who did not profess the state religion. There were many who deplored the errors and the superstitions of the Church of Rome, who were, at the same time, convinced that those errors were only the more pertinaciously adhered to because that church had been proscribed and persecuted. They had seen that penal and exclusive statutes had only wedded the people of Ireland to their ancient faith. They had seen catholicism strengthened by the very means used for its suppression; and they now wished to see its professors emancipated from their disabilities, in order that the irritation, which always is the result of oppression, might cease, and that, in the succeeding calm, reason and truth might exert their legitimate influence. That such irritation paralysed all protestant effort, however kindly intended, there was abundant proof. The Rev. and Hon. Baptist Noel, at a meeting held in Leeds, in April, 1825, declared that, in his efforts to establish in Ireland auxiliaries to the Hibernian Society, he had found the refusal of civil privileges to the catholics one of the greatest obstructions to the success of the society. It irritated them against the protestants, and made them suspect everything from that quarter, insomuch that one intelligent individual in that country said, "You

might as well hope to do good by sending tax-gatherers as by sending preachers, so long as this system continues." Mr. Baines, of the *Leeds Mercury*, who had all along manfully fought the battle for emancipation, in reference to Mr. Noel's remarks, said:—

"Mr. Noel gave no opinion about catholic emancipation; he especially declared that he should pronounce no opinion on the subject; but these facts he could not conceal—they stared him in the face wherever he went; and he feels bound to declare to the society in England what he felt to be the greatest practical impediment to his benevolent exertions. Mr. Noel is a most unexceptionable witness; for the treatment he received in Ireland would tend to impress him, not in favour of the catholics, but against them, if his superior intellect had not penetrated to the causes of things, and found that it was the English system, and not the Irish character, that was to blame."

With such evidence of the results of exclusion from civil rights, I saw a growing disposition in favour of a change of measures, and this disposition, I was convinced, had neutralised many whose dislike to popery might otherwise have made them the determined opposers of every proposal to release catholicism from the bonds which were imposed upon it by the fears or the hatred of a less enlightened and less tolerant age. Mr. Oxlad, a baptist minister, made an eloquent speech, at Chester, in which he expressed the sentiments of many who were beginning to think that a blind opposition to the claims of catholics was not the best way to promote the interests of protestantism. He said:—

"Aspiring demagogues, enlisted on the side of popery, can only succeed where the people have their minds irritated into asperities by political injuries. Where they have the means of education, admit them to equal rights—allow them no pretence for complaining as citizens, and your turbulent demagogues lose their influence—find no materials to work upon, and they are deprived of the only vantage ground on which they can ever stand. The political discontents of the catholics are the only reasons for alarm, for which emancipation is the only cure, and for which our opponents can advise no substitute

but the augmentation of the discontents. Oppress them, and you make them your enemies, and awaken, if you do not justify, their rage. You have been exhorted this morning not to suffer the claws of the lion to grow which your ancestors pared—the propriety of which metaphor I shall not question, and only add, that it would be well to remember, the lion, when starved and ill-treated, becomes rampant and outrageous. Whilst, however, I differ from many in estimating the danger of popery, I do not stand up to defend or excuse the system. I speak as a protestant, and a protestant dissenter; and without intending any disrespect to the respectable catholic clergymen present, I freely declare my abhorrence of popery; I long for its overthrow; and would not support the cause of emancipation if I thought it would in any degree delay this consummation of my wishes.”

There were still many persons who really feared the revival of the fires in Smithfield, if the laws against Catholics were made less stringent. It was worth while to show these timid people that protestantism could persecute in its turn. In an article in the *Gazette*, I enumerated some of the horrible atrocities perpetrated in Scotland, in the time between the battle of Bothwell Brig, in 1679, and the revolution of 1688, and said:—

“Be it recollected that these atrocities were not committed by the papists. Protestant blood was shed by Protestants. The deadly persecution was not directed by the Church of Rome against those she considered heretics, but by the Protestant Episcopal Church of England against the Protestant Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Does any one fear that a conventicle will now be attacked, sword in hand, because the preacher has chosen to be ordained by his co-presbyters rather than accept of episcopal ordination? The doctrines and government of both churches remain the same; but there is a change in the spirit with which the doctrines are held and the government administered; and with the example of this change amongst the members of the Church of England, and the substitution of a liberal and tolerant for a bigoted and intolerant spirit, we are justified in believing that whether the doctrines of the Church of Rome be changed or not, there is such a change amongst its members, so far as the spirit with which those doctrines are held, that persecution of any other sect would not now be attempted. For ourselves, we have

no more apprehension of seeing English liberties exposed to danger by Roman Catholic influence, than of seeing a Scotch Presbyterian shot by the direction of an English Protestant bishop, for attending a prayer meeting. Such things were; but he is ignorant of the spirit of the age, and the character of the people of these realms, who fears that such things may now be. Were civil privileges withheld from all those who hold the same opinions which were entertained by the intolerant two centuries ago, we suspect that the members of many religious sects would labour under the disadvantages of exclusion. It is peculiarly gratifying to all who value the mild and gentle spirit of Christianity, to see that those who seek in the sacred volume not only for comfort and consolation under the evils of life, but for rules of conduct, are becoming more and more convinced that it is decidedly opposed to every species of persecution on account of opinion; and that the unholy zeal which actuated the apostles against the Samaritans, when they solicited the Lord to 'command fire to come down from heaven and consume them,' is yielding to the spirit of the rebuke with which the call was met."

At the beginning of 1825, Mr. T. Sowler established the *Manchester Courier*. The tory and anti-catholic gentlemen of the town imagined that they were not sufficiently represented in the press. They had seen the whig *Guardian* in three years and a half attain a circulation of 2,200, and the sale of the whig-radical *Gazette* in half a year after it had been my property advanced from 1,000 to 1,500, each with a proportionate share of advertisements. There were four other newspapers, the *Mercury*, the *Chronicle*, the *British Volunteer*, and the *Exchange Herald*; the three first were ultra tory, the last what would now be called conservative, but the circulation of all together not amounting to so much as that of the two liberal papers, both of which were progressive, while the others were retrograding. Mr. Wheeler did not think his *Chronicle* needed improvement; Mr. Harrop left his *Mercury* and *British Volunteer* to be compiled by his compositors from the files of London and provincial papers, each, scissors in hand, cutting out, as "copy," what suited his own taste in politics or poetry, dog fighting or horse racing; and Mr. Aston was too gentle

and too benevolent to make his *Herald* the vehicle of any fierce discussion. A new tory paper was necessary, and Mr. T. Sowler was chivalrous enough to undertake to find his party an organ. The object was to counteract the influence of the whig and the whig-radical press. Mr. Taylor had the reputation of knowing something more than the value of raw cotton, and I was understood to know a thing or two beyond Glasgow muslins and Manchester shirtings and gingham. It was desirable that the editor of the new paper should be a man of *literary* reputation—an *author* by profession—one whose name in the republic of letters should scare out of the field the men of cotton bags and cambries. Mr. Alarie Watts was the chosen champion, a writer of some pretty poetry and some sharp criticisms on the fine arts, and, besides, a member of the *cliques* of London *literati*—excellent editorial qualifications, no doubt; but, unfortunately, he knew nothing of political science, and, as a poet, had disdained to acquire any knowledge of political economy. I had a brief tilt with him, but soon returned to the rule I had laid down, rather to teach truths than to be combatting against easily-refuted error. The *Guardian* and the *Courier*, however, found it convenient to continue the warfare. It was an easy thing to vindicate toryism by attacking the whig *Guardian*, and it was as easy to vindicate whigism by attacking the *Courier*. By continuing this warfare the public might at length be led to believe that there was no other party in Manchester than the party whig and the party tory, and that there were no other papers than the *Guardian* and the *Courier* that represented any portion of public opinion,—and so the tilting has continued from that day to this—always, and even now, as if there were some real points of difference between them. The meeting in the Manor Court Room in favour of Catholic emancipation set this petty quarrel a going. The *Courier* said that one half of the requisitionists were *Unitarians*; the *Guardian*, that this

was false. The *Courier* called for the names of those who were *not* Unitarians; the *Guardian* called on the *Courier* to name those who *were* Unitarians; and so the discussion went on for weeks together!

The Pitt Club needing some revivification, Mr. Watts's poetical talents were brought into requisition. The Duke of York's health, for his "so-help-me-God" speech, was given with three times three cheers and three cheers more. "The Cheshire Fox Hounds," coupled with the name of Sir Harry Mainwaring, had also three times three; and Watt's bacchanalian song, which was sung with great glee, and the burthen of which was, that—

"One drop less than a bumper would not be—the thing;
When the drinkers are tories, the toast is the king,"

procured for him the same honour that had been conferred on the hounds. It was described as a "most cordial and convivial meeting," for there was plenty of noise and plenty of wine, and every man appears to have cordially agreed with the maker of the song—

"Let whigs drink and be dumb—we will make the roof ring!"

And they did make the roof ring with toasts the utterance of which would now be considered as an outrage to common decency, even in a tap-room. These were the exultant days of a certain "captain," of whom we shall hear something in 1831.

CHAPTER XVII.

A PERIOD OF GREAT DISTRESS.

FROM the real and the apparent prosperity of this period, arose the proposal of some really useful public undertakings, some of which were afterwards carried into effect. In the *Manchester Gazette*, of the 1st of January, 1825, are the resolutions of a meeting to form a railway between Manchester and Bolton, with a capital of £100,000, a sum found to be very inadequate to the object. In the same paper is the prospectus of a railway from London to Manchester, by way of Birmingham, to be afterwards extended from Manchester to Hull; the sum proposed for this great work being only £2,500,000. In the paper of January 8th, is the prospectus of the Manchester and Leeds Railway, with a proposed capital of £500,000. In the same paper is a notice that 1,000 shares, of £100 each, had been subscribed for the Manchester, Stockport, and Peak Forest Railway, and that double the amount would be sufficient for the purpose. In the paper of January 15th, is the prospectus of the Grand Junction Railway, with a capital of £2,000,000. On January 22nd, appears the prospectus of the Manchester Central Junction Railway, to connect Manchester, by a line passing through Stockport, Chelford, Congleton, with the proposed line from Liverpool to Birmingham. On January 29th, there is the prospectus of a Manchester and Oldham Railway. On February 5th, there is the prospectus of a ship canal from the mouth of the river Dee to Manchester, —a project much laughed at and derided, but which will probably be revived, with better effect, at some future day. On the 12th of February I find the resolutions of the Committee of the Manchester and Liverpool Railway, and

an announcement that a petition to the House of Commons in its favour will lie at the Exchange Room for signature. These were some of the more sober schemes of a period which was characterized by the wildest speculation.

There is a class of persons who imagine that every depression of trade might be averted by a liberal issue of paper money. The extension of the currency in the years 1823-4-5, had encouraged a spirit of speculation which pervaded the whole country. Men there were then who held that nothing more was necessary to secure the continuance of apparent and, as they supposed, real prosperity, than the issue of more "promises to pay." The nation was drunk, and the prescription of the currency doctors was to increase the potency of the exhilarating draught. But the foreign exchanges were against us; gold began to leave the country, and the Bank of England had greatly to limit its issues, to prevent its coffers being drained of the precious metals. The country banks had deluged the country with one-pound notes, and the facility of obtaining discounts had encouraged the manufacture of a large amount of accommodation bills on the part of merchants and traders, who were in haste to make hay while the sun shone. It was obvious that such a state of things could not continue. In Manchester and its immediate vicinity, the issue of small rags had been steadily discountenanced, and, in consequence, the paper transactions represented, in a great degree, actual sales; and there was in circulation a greater proportion of Bank of England notes, and of gold and silver, when compared with the paper issued by provincial banks, than there was in any other part of the kingdom. But the country could not generally suffer without involving Manchester in the calamity. The country bankers, by the end of November, 1825, began to make heavy demands on the discounting houses in London. One house, which used to have about thirty applications on a Monday, had, on Monday, November 28th, no fewer than three hundred.

The failure of Sir William Elford's bank, at Plymouth, added to the alarm in the London money market, and a run on the Plymouth banks forced the bankers into London to obtain, at any cost, the means to meet the sudden demand. The failure of the great bank of Wentworth and Co., Wakefield, added to the general alarm in the metropolis, and occasioned quite a panic in the manufacturing districts in Yorkshire. In Manchester the circulation of provincial notes was instantaneously stopped. Every one hastened to pay away what he had, but no one would receive them; and every note (except those which were payable there, and which were promptly exchanged for gold, till long past the usual banking hours) became, for the time, nothing more than waste paper. In the corn market business was almost entirely suspended; cheese, which had been weighed out by the ton for the country shopkeepers, was put back again when it was found that the buyers had nothing to pay with but country paper; and the shopkeepers, in many instances, chose rather to give credit to persons who were almost strangers to them, than to take payment in a medium which had ceased to be current.

The general alarm was greatly increased when, on Saturday evening, December 10th, it was announced that the London banking house of Sir Peter Pole, Bart., Thornton and Company, had determined not to open their doors on the Monday, and that Dobson and Co., of Huddersfield, had stopped payment. The run on the banks in Wakefield, Huddersfield, and Halifax was terrific, but timely supplies and declarations of confidence from the leading manufacturers sustained them in the emergency. From Oldham to Dobeross the road was a scene of complete hurry and bustle, tradesmen and manufacturers being seen hastening on their way to exchange the paper of the Saddleworth banks for gold. On the Wednesday bills were distributed, to which were attached the signatures of upwards of two hundred individuals or firms, stating that "the undersigned, feeling

satisfied as to the responsibility of the two respectable banking houses of Buckley, Roberts, and Co., and Harrop, Brown, and Co., of Saddleworth, and foreseeing the ruinous consequences to trade which must be produced by suddenly withdrawing from circulation the provincial promissory notes, do hereby express our determination to take their notes, as usual, to any amount." This publication restored confidence in the stability of the Saddleworth banks, although from Manchester there was a continued demand upon them for gold in exchange for their paper, influenced by some resentment that after former efforts to get rid of their notes there should still be so many of them in circulation. In my paper of December 31st I find the following list of the failures of country banks:—

Ashburton.—Brown and Co. Will pay every demand in January.

Alton.—Levy and Co.

Banbury.—Gillett and Co. Stopped in consequence of the failure of Gibbons and Co., Birmingham.

Bedford.—Rawlings and Co.

Birmingham.—Gibbons, Smith, and Bood.

Boston.—Ingelow and Co.

Bristol.—Brown, Cavanagh, and Co.

Bath.—Cavanagh, Brown, and Co., and Smith, Moyer, and Co.

Bradford, Wakefield, and York.—Wentworth, Chaloner, and Co.

Brighton.—Lashmal and Muggeridge, and Gregory, Tamplin, and Greary.

Cheltenham and Gloucester.—Turners and Morris.

Tewkesbury and Evesham.—Hartland and Son.

Chertsey.—Lacoste and Co. Since resumed.

Cambridge.—Hillock and Co.

Chelmsford.—Craket, Russell, and Co.

Daventry.—Watkins and Co. In consequence of the suspension of Sykes and Co.

Dorchester.—R. Pattison and Co. In consequence of the suspension of Williams and Co.

Dorking.—Piper and Co.

Devonport.—Shields and Johns.

Darlington.—Skinner and Co. Since resumed.

Deal.—May and Co.

- Diss.*—Fincham and Son.
- Falmouth.*—Carne, Lake, and Carnes.
- Gravesend.*—Branchley and Co.
- Hereford.*—Garratt and Son.
- Hinckley.*—Jervis and Co., and Sansoms and Co., who both drew on Sir P. Pole and Co.
- Huddersfield.*—John Dobson and Son.
- Kettering.*—Gotch and Son, and Keen and Co.
- Kingston (Surrey).*—Shrubsole and Co.
- Lewes.*—Wood, Hall, and Co.
- Leicester.*—Clarke and Phillips. All demands seem likely to be paid in full.
- Maidstone.*—Edmeads, Etkins, and Tyrell, who drew on Sir P. Pole and Co.
- Monmouth.*—Sneed and Co. Notes still current.
- Melksham.*—Mowle, Son, and Co. Will soon resume.
- Mallon.*—Crichton, Russell, and Co.
- Nantwich.*—Broughton and Garnett.
- Newcastle-under-Lyne.*—Sparrow and Co.
- Norwich (and various branches).*—T. H. and W. Day.
- Northampton.*—Smith, Osborne, and Co.
- Peterborough.*—Simpson, White, and Co.
- Plymouth.*—Sir W. Elford and Co.
- Poole and Wimborne.*—Dean, Clapcott, and Co.
- Romford.*—Joyner and Co., who drew on Esdaile and Co.; and Joyner and Co., who drew on Gill and Co.
- Ripon and Knaresbro'.*—Charnock and Thackray.
- Saffron Walden.*—Searle, Son, and Co., and Searle and Co.
- Southampton.*—Killon and Pritchard. Have fixed an early day for payment of notes.
- St. Neol's.*—Rix, Gorham, and Co.
- Sheerness.*—E. Bishop.
- Stockton.*—Hutchinson and Place.
- Swansea.*—Gibbons, Eaton, and Co.—and Haines.
- Tewkesbury.*—Hartland and Co.
- Weymouth.*—Henning, Bower, and Co.
- Wellingbro'.*—Morton and Co.
- Winchester.*—Deane and Co. Since resumed.
- Windsor.*—Ramsbottom and Leigh.
- Wimborne.*—Dean and Co.
- Wisbeach.*—Hill and Son.
- Whitehaven.*—Johnson, Adams, and Co.

The failure of so many country banks caused an almost unparalleled number of bankruptcies amongst country drapers, and these failures bore very heavily on the wholesale houses in Manchester, London, and Bristol, who were also, generally holding large stocks, greatly sufferers by the sudden fall of the prices of goods. For a time the home trade was completely paralyzed, and the manufactures which should have gone to the home supply were thrown upon the foreign market, working out a further reduction of prices. Under these circumstances manufacturers ceased to produce, and tens of thousands of the working classes were at once thrown out of employment, who bore their distress with most exemplary patience. For a year and a half I had applied myself as a journalist to explain the circumstances which regulated the wages of labour, and had succeeded in convincing such of them as were able to buy my paper, at a time when government exacted a duty of threepence farthing on every newspaper sheet, that a reduction of prices was occasioned, far less by the grasping cupidity of masters, than by a mistaken or a selfish legislation, under which masters and men suffered alike severely. This conviction did much to prevent that bitterness of feeling which had been the occasion of many long-enduring contests between employers and employed. A number of persons so instructed, seeing that the corn laws, in their double operation of limiting the demand for labour, and consequently its reward, and raising the price of food, were deeply injurious to the manufacturing interests of the country, resolved to hold a meeting to petition for their repeal, and it was held in the Manor Court Room, on the 24th of January, 1826, and was attended by from 1,500 to 2,000 persons, principally of the working classes; but amongst them were a considerable number of the more wealthy inhabitants of the town, attracted less, perhaps, by the importance of the subject to be discussed, than by a desire to be auditors of an eloquence which few supposed

to be possessed by the working people, till I had given reports of some of their meetings, which, previously, the Manchester newspapers had passed over without notice. A working man was called to the chair, and requested attention to every speaker, whether his sentiments were or were not in accordance with those of the meeting generally. Another working man, named Foster, who had taken an active part in promoting Hobhouse's bill for shortening, with the consent of the principal master cotton spinners, the hours of labour in factories, proposed the first resolution. He said, that the landed interest, in order to shift the burthen of taxation from their own shoulders, had thrown it upon the shoulders of the manufacturers, and that they, in their turn, had to give less in wages, and thus the load came ultimately to be borne by the working classes. He congratulated the meeting that they could now meet to give expression to their grievances, and that they did not now assemble to attack the butchers' and bakers' shops, but to petition against the continuance of laws which were injurious to all classes of the community except the landlord class. Jonathan Hodgins, who had distinguished himself by his speech on Catholic emancipation, in seconding the resolution, said that the time had been when masters and men contended with each other, but now they might cordially unite to give a decisive blow to the system which impoverished them both,—a system which, more than all the tyranny that employers had ever exercised, tended to oppress the people. It is rather curious that when a dinner, some twenty years after this period, was given by the English merchants of St. Petersburg to Mr. Cobden, this same Hodgins should rise up and argue in favour of the continuance of the corn-law ! He had been engaged as the manager of a cotton mill in Russia, and the humble salary at which he was first employed had been gradually raised till he was in possession of an income of £600 a year. The meeting of the merchants and manu-

facturers of Manchester had been to obtain a revision of the corn-laws ; the meeting of the working classes was to pray for their total repeal.

While the working men were thus proving their capacity to exercise political rights, the boroughreeve and constables manifested a spirit which was worthy of the palmy days of the church-and-king clubs. A requisition was presented to them on the first of February to call a public meeting to consider the propriety of petitioning parliament on the subject of negro slavery in our colonies, and in support of his majesty's government in their declared intention to ameliorate the condition of the slave population. It was signed by 153 individuals of the highest respectability, and the subject proposed to be discussed was one which, however viewed as to its humanity and policy, could not by any possibility have given rise to that warmth of contention which occasionally took place when political parties came into collision. The requisitionists asked no more than that their fellow-townsmen should be called together to consider the propriety of petitioning the legislature to give effect to its own resolutions. That a refusal would be given to such a requisition, no one could have anticipated ; for even supposing the gentlemen who filled the offices of boroughreeve and constables to be so unfortunate in their opinions as conscientiously to believe that nothing should be done to ameliorate the condition of slaves, no one could have imagined that they would have stood in the way of the support which their townsmen, by a public expression of their sentiments, were disposed to give to his majesty's government. So little was it anticipated that these gentlemen would put their veto to such a requisition, that when the question was asked what should be done if they were unwilling to call a meeting, such a result was considered too improbable to make any ulterior measure a matter of discussion. They did, however, refuse. The boroughreeve and constables of Manchester did actually refuse to

convene a meeting, at which it was proposed to strengthen the hands of his majesty's ministers, by a public expression of the approval which their humane interposition in behalf of the injured negro race had obtained from all ranks and every party. "After much consideration," said they, "we have felt it our duty to decline calling the public meeting proposed in the highly respectable requisition presented to us this day!" In Bristol, or in Liverpool, while the inhabitants were fully engaged in the guilty traffic of buying and selling their fellow-men, and when self-interest warped the judgment and deadened the sense of justice, and humanity slept, and the cry of God's creatures was unheard except in heaven—in such times a refusal to call a meeting might not have been thought wonderful, though even there the refusal on the part of municipal officers might have been considered an ungracious prejudgment of the question which it was proposed to discuss. The boroughreeve was Mr. William Lomas; the constables were Messrs. Charles Cross and J. B. Wanklyn. Their refusal did not, however, prevent the meeting being held, and from that time to the total abolition of slavery Manchester took a prominent part in the humane movement.

The manufacturers of Manchester and its vicinity, in the belief that the prosperity of 1824 and 1825 would continue, had been producing largely, and had considerable stocks on hand at the termination of the latter year. The sudden and extraordinary depression of trade made it unprofitable to produce more until prices had found their level; and although a humane consideration of the distress of the working classes led many to strive to keep on a portion of their hands, a very great number of them were thrown out of employment. For the relief of these, subscriptions were raised in most of the manufacturing towns, and in Manchester the amount subscribed, by the end of April, 1826, exceeded £8,000, which was expended in a weekly distribution of provisions. The unemployed had borne their

privations with a most exemplary patience ; but the uninstructed multitude began to think that the extensive use of machinery was a main cause of their distress ; and as the hand-loom weavers were more out of employment than any other class of operatives, they attributed their wretchedness to the introduction of steam-looms. This was a class of workers who, even when in employment, could not afford to read a seven-penny newspaper, which might have been threepence-halfpenny but for the government tax. There was a heavy penalty on the acquisition of knowledge, and they remained ignorant ; and an ignorant is seldom a peaceable people. At Accrington, on the evening of Tuesday, April the 18th, a mob of probably two thousand persons assembled round the steam-loom factory of Messrs. Sykes, and proceeded to break the windows. The manager, who went out to address the misguided multitude, was assaulted and treated very roughly, and, fears being entertained that still greater violence would be resorted to, the military were sent for. On the following evening, when the market coach from Manchester arrived at Blackburn, it was assailed by a crowd of people, who showered stones upon it, and some of the manufacturers, who were in and upon it, received severe bruises.

On the evening of the day on which disturbances were commenced at Accrington, Mr. Whitmore brought on his motion in the House of Commons for a committee to inquire into the operation of the corn-laws. It was strenuously opposed by Mr. Huskisson. He had promised, in the previous session, that the question should be brought before the house, but the circumstances of the country, he said, were now different ; the subject required a more serious consideration than could now be given to it ; anxious as he was for free trade, it would be highly impolitic and injurious to repeal the corn-laws ; it would tend to aggravate rather than lessen the evil ! This was uttered at the very moment when starving weavers were attacking power-

loom factories—uttered at the very time when there was abundance of wheat to be had on the continent at half the price to which the corn-laws had raised it in England. The house supported the minister of trade. There were only 81 votes in favour of Mr. Whitmore's motion, and 251 against it. I remarked on these coincidences :—

“ While we would strongly mark our condemnation of every act of violence, whatever may be the actuating causes, and whatever excuse extreme wretchedness may give, we feel it our duty to say that if the legislature do not immediately adopt measures for the alleviation of the distresses of the people, it will incur all the guilt of permitting thousands to die of actual starvation. By a reference to a table of prices of grain at different foreign ports, which will be found in the first page, it will be seen that the monopoly enjoyed by the owners of the soil in this country has raised the price of corn to nearly double what it might be were the trade open. Will any man, not wilfully blind to the truth, dare to assert, that while the people are starving, things ought to remain in this state? We had hopes that the liberal spirit which has been recently shown by the administration would be communicated to that house which ought to represent the people, and that this odious and oppressive monopoly would be destroyed; but the result of Tuesday night's debate on the corn-laws has driven us back to our old conviction, that, constituted as the house now is, the interests of the individuals who compose it will always be regarded in preference to those of the community.”

The disturbances at Accrington and Blackburn were only preliminary to others of more serious consequences. On Monday, April 24th, a great number of persons assembled on some high ground at Henfield, between Blackburn and Burnley, from whence they proceeded in a body to Accrington, where their arrival had been fearfully expected. They immediately surrounded the mill of Messrs. Sykes and Co., and a part of the body entered the mill and began to demolish the power-looms, sixty in number, which, in the short space of a quarter of an hour, they broke completely to pieces, destroying also the dressing machines, and materially injuring the engine. They then proceeded to Rough Hey,

where twenty looms in the factory of Mr. Walmsley were smashed to pieces. Mr. Bury's factory at White Ash was next attacked, and the power-looms, eighty in number, were demolished. The military were called in, but the rioters had finished their work and were on their march to Blackburn. There they immediately proceeded to the factory of Bannister, Eccles, and Co., where they deliberately destroyed the looms. A troop of thirty soldiers was drawn out, but could not act, as there was no magistrate present to direct it. The factory of Mr. Oughton, at Grimshaw Park, was next attacked, and twenty-four looms broken. The soldiers arrived nearly as soon as the rioters, and were assailed with stones. In firing in return there was one man killed and two dangerously wounded. The rioters then retired to Blackburn for the night.

On Tuesday an attack was made on Turner's mill, at Helmshore; but, a small body of the Queen's Bays making its appearance, the rioters fled, leaving, however, fourteen of their number in the mill, who were taken into custody while engaged in the work of demolition. They were conveyed to Haslingden; but there the fury of the multitude was so great, that it was thought prudent to set them at liberty.

On Wednesday morning, several hundred persons collected at Rawtenstall, and commenced the work of destruction by demolishing one hundred looms, in the factory of Messrs. Whitehead. The mob, then, with a great accession of numbers, proceeded to Mr. Kaye's mill, at Longholm, where, in a few minutes, they destroyed about twenty looms. The next attack was upon the factory of Rostron and Sons, at Edenfield, where one hundred looms were instantly broken to pieces. The rioters then proceeded towards Chadderton, and were met on the road by a small party of soldiers, accompanied by Mr. William Grant, one of the county magistrates—a man of great benevolence, and much beloved and respected by the country people—

who addressed them on the folly and wickedness of their conduct, and urged them to return to their own homes. His advice was disregarded, and the Riot Act was read. This had the effect to disperse them for a time; but they re-assembled, and proceeded to Aikin and Lord's factory. Here, being kept in check by the military, they could do no mischief, and they moved in the direction of Ramsbottom, followed by the soldiers. The field being clear, a number of persons who were left behind forced themselves into the factory and destroyed the whole of the looms. The soldiers were recalled, and on their return were assailed by the mob, who showered stones upon them, by which several were severely hurt. They were then ordered to fire, and the consequences were that three men were killed on the spot, and a man and woman were wounded, both of whom died in a few hours afterwards. The mob now divided into two bodies, one of which went off in the direction of Bacup, the other in the direction of Bury. The latter attacked the factory of Hamer and Son, at Summerseat, and in the course of ten minutes broke thirty-eight looms. They then went to Mr. Whitehead's factory, at Woodhill, close to Bury, where they broke thirty-eight looms. The body which had taken the road to Bacup, destroyed six woollen looms at Messrs. Ormrod and Son's, of Holt Mill, and also a few at Hargreaves' and Hardham's, Bacup. About five o'clock they broke open the door of Mr. Munn's factory, and a person who was present noticed that they were exactly thirty-five minutes in breaking the looms, 51 in number. This terminated the riotous proceedings of that day.

While these disturbances were taking place in the neighbourhood, very little apprehension existed that they would extend to Manchester. Some alarm, however, was excited on Thursday, by a body of men marching through the principal streets in procession, and by an announcement, that in the evening a meeting of those who were unemployed would take place in St. George's Fields. At six

in the evening the proposed meeting took place. It was addressed by one or two individuals, who urged upon those who were present the necessity of standing firmly to each other, to destroy the power-looms, which, they said, were the cause of their being unemployed, and assured them no military force could withstand them, if they would only assert their rights like men. Amongst the persons led by curiosity to the place of meeting was Jonathan Hodgins, a man whose name had been made pretty well known by his plain and untutored eloquence, and who, feeling, as he afterwards assured me, that he should not do his duty if he did not oppose the mischievous persons who endeavoured to excite the people to violence, ventured forward, and succeeded in obtaining a hearing. He expressed his sympathy with the distress which probably all who heard him experienced, but he asked, could they relieve it by attacking provision shops, or destroying looms? "No," said he, "the only possible result of such violence would be, that they would suffer under the swords of the military, and that not the slightest alteration would be made in the system of which they complained. The parish was bound to support the distressed; and if the parish officers did not grant assistance, the applicants might appeal to the magistrate, who would order them relief. Till all these legal resources were tried, every attempt to obtain their purpose by other means was illegal." Mr. Hodgins's address was at first listened to with some impatience; and even when he had gained a favourable hearing from the majority, there was a manifestation of feeling amongst a part of the people which was rather alarming.

At this time I arrived at the outside of the assemblage, accompanied by two young friends. In pressing forward to hear what was passing, the crowd fell away on each side, opening an avenue for our advance. As I was known to many working men, I thought I might have an opportunity of advising them of the consequences of the lawless pro-

ceedings of the strangers who had come to excite them to action; but I was somewhat alarmed when I saw that the opening made for our advance was instantly closed behind us, and that we were completely hemmed in. When we got into the middle of the circle, Hodgins, thus reinforced, continued his address, and urged the meeting to petition against the corn laws, the repeal of which might give them some relief, and to refrain from violence, which would only recoil upon themselves. I then got on a high pile of bricks and, what with the insecurity of my footing, the coldness of the day, and the apprehension that I was making a rather hazardous experiment, I did not feel that I was standing very firmly on my legs. Some threatening cries were uttered, but were met by shouts of "Hear him." I told them that I had attended a meeting in the police-office that very morning, at which the individuals present had subscribed £1,000 as the commencement of a new subscription for the relief of the distress, although they had all been contributors to the £8,000 fund, which had already been expended; that the king had sent £1,000 to the Manchester, the same sum to the Blackburn, and the same sum to the Macclesfield funds; that there was every disposition amongst the merchants, manufacturers, and shopkeepers, notwithstanding the very heavy losses they had recently incurred, and the large amount of poor-rates they had to pay, to do their utmost to relieve the distressed; and that there was ready for distribution next day nearly 20,000 lbs. of bacon, and more than 100,000 lbs. of meal. The announcement of this liberality was favourably received, and I went on to say that I had, for the last ten years, been an attentive observer of the conduct of the working men in Manchester; that I had never, during that period, seen any attempt of theirs to destroy private property, and I begged and prayed, as they respected the reputation they had acquired for exemplary patience, that they would continue to manifest the same disposition; that they would

not listen to the strangers who had come there to urge them to acts of violence and destruction, but would all follow me out of the field, and peaceably depart to their own homes. I then left the place, and was followed by probably 3,000 out of the 5,000 or 6,000 who had congregated. The rest remained on the field, mostly mere lads, mixed with the strangers who had come down the valley of the Irwell, marking their progress by destruction.

I instantly gave notice at the police-office of the nature of the meeting, and urged the magistrates who were there assembled, in mercy to the lads who were likely to be led into violence, to send a troop of horse into the neighbourhood, being assured that the very sound of their hoofs would disperse their crowds. One of the magistrates said it was rather inconsistent that I, who had found so much fault with the employment of soldiers on the 16th of August, 1819, should now recommend that they should be called out. I replied that there was no inconsistency in it: on the 16th of August, troops were directed against a legally convened and peaceably assembled meeting; here was a meeting, the avowed object of which was to destroy property, and might be dispersed by the mere show of power without bloodshed. The military were not in readiness till ten o'clock, and by that time Beaver's factory, in Jersey-street, had been set fire to in half-a-dozen places, and burnt down nearly to the ground. On the following day, the magistrates ordered the Queen's Bays to parade the streets, and this had the effect of repressing the disturbances, which were confined to the plunder of some bread shops.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SYMPTOMS OF MOVEMENT.

ON Monday, May 1st (1826), Mr. Secretary Canning announced that ministers intended to apply to parliament to vest in them the discretionary power to allow the foreign corn then in bond to come into consumption, and to admit the importation of wheat, limiting the quantity to 500,000 quarters, at a duty of twelve shillings, asserting the emergency as a reason for a temporary deviation from the principle of protection. No discussion on the corn-law was permitted, both Mr. Canning and Mr. Huskisson declaring that then "was not the time." There was not a single argument used in favour of a temporary suspension of the corn-laws that would not have been applicable to their total repeal. The admission of so much wheat which otherwise would have rotted in the bonding warehouses, together with very liberal subscriptions in London and in all the large towns, and the prospect of a great amount of employment being given in constructing the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, did much to allay the existing discontent, and to preserve the peace. An admirable address to the unemployed, written from Rouen in France, by Mr. Edward Baines, jun., of Leeds, and widely circulated amongst those classes which were unable to purchase the heavily taxed newspaper, had also a considerable effect in showing that the extension of machinery had not been the cause of distress.

A general election took place during a period of almost unexampled suffering. The general body of the people took no interest in the choice of members, who, in the then state of the representation, were only the nominees of the

landed aristocracy, or of the owners of rotten boroughs. While the farce of election was going on all around us, I employed myself in examining the actual state of the representative system, and culled out some proofs of the falsehood of denominating the members of the House of Commons representatives of the people. At the previous census, the population of the unrepresented parish of Manchester amounted to 187,031. Being desirous to ascertain how many represented boroughs would give a population equal to that of this large unrepresented parish, I set about adding up the numbers in each, and found that the population of one hundred boroughs, each sending two members, amounted to only 185,197. The following is the list:—

| | | | |
|------------------------------|------|------------------------|------|
| Arundel | 2511 | Droitwich | 2176 |
| Ashburton... .. | 3403 | Dunwich | 200 |
| Aldborough | 1212 | Evesham | 3487 |
| Aldborough | 735 | Eye | 1882 |
| Amersham | 2612 | Fenny Stratford | 521 |
| Appleby | 1341 | Fowey | 1455 |
| Barkway | 993 | Galton | 135 |
| Bishop's Castle... .. | 1880 | Grimsby | 3064 |
| Bletchingly | 1187 | Grimstead... .. | 3153 |
| Bodmin | 3278 | Guilford | 3161 |
| Boroughbridge... .. | 860 | Haslemere | 887 |
| Bossiney and Tintagel | 877 | Hedon | 902 |
| Brackley | 1851 | Helston | 2671 |
| Bramben | 98 | Heylesbury | 1329 |
| Buckingham | 3465 | Higham Ferrers | 877 |
| Bedwin | 1928 | Hindon | 830 |
| Beer Ferris | 2191 | Honiton | 3296 |
| Corfe Castle | 1465 | Huntingdon | 2806 |
| Callington... .. | 1321 | Hythe | 2181 |
| Castle Rising | 343 | Ilchester | 844 |
| Chippenham | 3506 | Launceston | 2183 |
| Clitheroe | 3213 | Liskeard | 3519 |
| Cockermouth | 3790 | Loe, East | 770 |
| Chricklade... .. | 1485 | Loe, West | 539 |
| Dorchester | 2743 | Lostwithcal | 933 |
| Dornton | 3114 | Ludgers Hall | 477 |

| | | | |
|----------------------|------|-----------------------------|------|
| Lyne Regis | 2269 | Shoreham | 1047 |
| Lymington | 3164 | Steyning | 3424 |
| Maldon | 3198 | St. Germans | 2404 |
| Malmesbury | 1976 | St. Ives | 3526 |
| Malborough | 1338 | St. Mawes | 1648 |
| Midhurst | 1335 | St. Michael's | 201 |
| Milborne Port | 1440 | Stockbridge | 715 |
| Newport | 977 | Thetford | 2922 |
| Oakhampton | 2023 | Thirsk | 3502 |
| Oxford | 1119 | Tiverton | 1500 |
| Petersfield | 1152 | Totness | 1035 |
| Penryn | 2933 | Tregony | 2712 |
| Plympton | 762 | Truro | 2712 |
| Queenbury | 881 | Wallingford | 2093 |
| Retford | 2465 | Wareham | 1931 |
| Richmond | 3546 | Wendover | 1602 |
| Romney | 962 | Wenlock | 2200 |
| Rye | 3599 | Weobly | 739 |
| Ryegate | 2961 | Whitechurch | 1434 |
| Saltash | 1548 | Wilton | 2058 |
| Sandwich | 2912 | Winchelsea | 819 |
| Sarum, Old | 0 | Woodstock | 1455 |
| Seaford | 1047 | Wootton Bassett | 1701 |
| Shaftesbury | 2903 | Yarmouth, Isle of Wight ... | 564 |

Each of these miserable villages sending two members of parliament, while Manchester, with a population greater than that of the whole put together, did not send one, and while Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Oldham, Ashton, and Stockport did not send one, was it wonderful that there should be deep discontent? Was it not more wonderful that there should be any tranquillity—any submission? The publication of this list, over and over again, in every possible shape, and year after year, did some good. Was there a single instance of disregard of public opinion, out came the list to show that the people were not represented. Was there a single instance of class legislation, out came the list to show that nothing better was to be expected. Men committed it to memory, and taught from it as from a text. There was nothing new in it; anybody could have complied

it; anybody could have contrasted Old Sarum with Manchester. But the fact that one hundred boroughs sent two hundred members, the whole of those places not containing so many inhabitants as the single unrepresented parish of Manchester, sunk into men's minds, and prepared them for the subsequent contest. An article from my paper of the 15th of July, printed in small type, on the "Causes and Cure of the Present Distress," was sold in thousands, and carried instruction to tens of thousands, who seldom had a chance of seeing a sevenpenny newspaper.

In August it was determined to hold a meeting, at which public opinion might be expressed upon the state of the country. A short time previously the boroughreeve and constables had refused to call a meeting to take the question of slavery into consideration; and it was resolved that application should not be made in this instance to those petty officers of the lord of the manor. The requisition to call a public meeting was, therefore, addressed to the churchwardens, who, being elected by the ratepayers, might be supposed willing to allow their constituents to be heard. Those gentlemen refused. This conduct, on the part of these two sets of public officers, did much to create the desire for the incorporation of the borough, which was afterwards effected. The meeting, however, was called, on the requisition of the following gentlemen:—

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| John Potter, | Matthew Hedley, | R. H. Hargreaves, |
| Joseph Leese, | Edward Baxter, | Thomas Burgess, |
| John Shuttleworth, | James Simpson, | John M'Clure, |
| J. S. Jones, | Samuel Winks, | Robert H. Greg, |
| William Croft, | Richard Potter, | James G. Frost, |
| James Bayley, | William Harvey, | R. Henson, |
| John Roberts, | R. W. Culverwell, | J. P. Culverwell, |
| Samuel Pope, | J. Wood, | G. Culverwell. |
| Archibald Prentice, | Samuel Pullein, | |

It will be seen by those who recollect the names of gentlemen then known as usually taking a part in public business, that they were few on the above list of the

persons who were usually designated as "constitutional whigs." They held aloof, and represented the movement as being likely to endanger the public peace. The meeting was held on the 19th, in the Manor Court Room, which was crowded to excess. Mr. Edward Baxter in the chair. The first resolution, declaratory of the general distress, was proposed by Mr. Richard Potter, who drew a picture of the wretchedness of the working people, which was listened to with expressions of the deepest sympathy. The motion was seconded by Mr. David Holt. The second resolution, declaratory of the mischievous operations of the corn laws, was proposed by Mr. John Shuttleworth, who ably combatted the argument of the agriculturists, that they were entitled to protection because they had to bear the "peculiar burthens" on land; *he disclaimed all protection to home manufactures* as more mischievous than beneficial; he demanded a recurrence to sound principles in the trade in corn as essential to the preservation of our commerce; and strongly urged the necessity and the duty of a strong protest against laws which were ruinous to ourselves, and likely to shake with foreign states those relations of peace and friendship which shed blessings on all; and for the continuance of which a free trade in corn would be an additional, probably the most powerful, security. The seconder of the resolution was Mr. Mark Philips, afterwards member for the borough, who, it was understood, appeared at the meeting much against the wishes of some of his whig friends, but who saw, in the stern necessities of the times, a strong reason for entering his earnest protest against the impoverishing corn laws. At the conclusion of his short but energetic speech, which, from a young man making his first appearance, the son of an old and firm friend of reform, was received with great applause, he modestly apologised for addressing the meeting, but said that at a time when tens of thousands were suffering the deepest distress, it was an imperative duty to stand forward

and declare the wretchedness which had been occasioned by bad legislation. The third resolution, declaratory of the excessive pressure of taxation, was proposed by myself. I asked if there was anything in the circumstances of the country that would justify an expenditure fourteen times greater than it was in the reign of George the First? Coming to a later period, a period subsequent to that war against our colonies, in which we expended a sum the mere interest on which was larger than the revenue of the new and prosperous republic that had achieved its independence; even with the interest on the debt, the expenditure in 1792 was not more than one-fourth of its amount in 1826, after eleven years of peace. It appeared that the machinery of the state was the only machinery that had not received simplification and improvement, and that while art and science had combined to lower the cost of everything else, the cost of government had daily become greater and greater. Mr. Croft, in seconding the motion, said that ministers, in reducing the duties on silk while they resisted the repeal of the corn-laws, had acted with great inconsistency and great injustice. The other resolutions were proposed or seconded by Messrs. William Harvey, Thomas Burgess, Benjamin Holbrooke, Fielding, and Pullein.

The *Guardian* newspaper had done what it could to prevent this meeting being held. Its proprietor had refused to sign the requisition, on the ground, as he afterwards alleged, that some proposal would emanate from it for breaking faith with the public creditor! After it had taken place, for weeks together, he continued to contend that the amount of taxation, per head of the population, as stated by me, was less than it had been in 1811, leaving entirely out of view the great increase in the value of money, occasioned by the resumption of cash payments. He had, in the previous year, purchased the copyright of Harrop's *British Volunteer*, incorporated that paper with the *Guardian*, and had thus added a thousand tory readers

to his former subscription list. He was thus enabled to announce that his circulation was double that of any other Manchester paper, and this occasioned a great influx of advertisements, and made him entirely "independent" of the whig-radicals who had furnished him with the means of establishing his newspaper. This "independence" he now manifested in declining the request of Mr. Baxter, a gentleman who had been most active in getting up the subscription to establish the *Guardian*, to allow the petition to the king to lie at his office for signature. The example of Manchester, however, was followed by many of the large towns, and ministers, yielding to the outcry against the corn-laws, exercised the discretionary powers vested in them by parliament, by admitting certain kinds of grain and pulse to be taken for consumption at a small duty. The distress, however, continued, in great intensity, and parliament showing no disposition to adopt any permanent measures of relief, men's minds were strongly directed to the constitution of the house which professed to represent the people. In an article on the state of the country, in my paper of the 2nd of December, I said:—

"We suspect that the time is not far distant when the people of this country will be convinced by painful experience, that a jealous watchfulness of the measures of government, and a firm determination to oppose, by every constitutional means, the existence of gross abuses in the machinery of the state, and the creation of oppressive and impoverishing laws, are as necessary, in order to preserve the prosperity of the nation, and, indeed, its very existence, as a commercial country, as industry and caution are to the success of individuals. How often have we heard the senseless cry of 'mind your own business, and let politics alone,' whenever a clear-headed man endeavoured to rouse the public to a sense of their danger. However, the time is not far distant, when every one will find that politics **MUST** be studied, and when the legislature **MUST** be told, in firm, and manly, and most decided terms, that a **GREAT REFORM** is absolutely necessary in order to rescue the country from a ruin which is not the less certain because its approaches are slow and gradual. This time is coming. People begin to learn in the dear school of experience that a law which prevents our obtaining the necessaries of

life from other nations, and at the same time deprives them of the power of purchasing our manufactures, is really adverse to our commercial prosperity. Hence the universal opinion, in this part of the country, that an alteration of the CORN-LAWS is necessary for the very existence of our trade, and the consequent loud call for their repeal or modification. These calls will be followed by others, still more loud and importunate, for a GREAT REDUCTION OF TAXATION, for it must become daily more obvious, that the only argument for the permission of the corn monopoly is, that the owners of the soil need high prices, to enable them to pay high taxes; and, as those calls will not be listened to, or if heard, will be, by such miserable sophistry as Mr. Canning, with so little regard to his reputation, had recourse to the other evening, in order to show that the erection of splendid palaces was, in reality, a means of lessening the sufferings of the people;—as such calls will be answered by such insults to common sense, the people will in time acknowledge that it would have been well had they earlier inquired into the state of the representation; and, being at length convinced that it was an essential part of their ‘business’ to take care that the public purse shall be entrusted to honest guardians, they will then demand a THOROUGH REFORM of the representative system. ‘To this complexion we must come at last;’ and it is a moral cowardice in those who are convinced of the necessity of parliamentary reform, to avoid the mention of the great cause of the evils against which they remonstrate. At a meeting of the members of the Chamber of Commerce, it was resolved to petition against the CORN-LAWS; but no notice was taken of the doubly oppressive load of taxation. At the meeting of the ratepayers, in August last—a meeting which, whatever the editor of the *Guardian*, and a few timid, self-styled whigs, might think of it, was one of the most important that ever was held in Manchester, and one whose resolutions excited more attention throughout the nation than any which preceded them,—at that great meeting it was resolved to petition for a repeal of the corn-laws, and a great reduction of taxation, but no notice was taken of the state of that house which sanctioned the imposition of the grievous public burthens under which we groan, and, for the interests of its own members, passed the law which is so rapidly destroying our trade and manufactures. Another meeting is talked of, and we trust that in remonstrating against the continuance of oppressive burthens, the system under which they have been imposed will not escape the animadversion of our public-spirited townsmen, and that their petitions will be for A TOTAL REPEAL OF THE CORN-LAWS, A GREAT REDUCTION OF TAXATION, AND PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.”

Six years were still to elapse before any portion of parliamentary reform was obtained ; twenty-three years before foreign corn was to be admitted free of duty. If men were to foresee all the difficulties to be overcome in effecting public good, little would be attempted. In after times, when I was asked how soon the abolition of the corn laws would be effected, my reply usually was : “ No man can speak with certainty as to the time : one thing we are sure of—it will never come unless we ask for it. It is our business and our duty to forward the time as much as we can.”

In the year 1826, in which the deep distress of the poor and the timely benevolence of the wealthier classes were alike memorable, a society was established, having for its object the preservation of a right of considerable importance to the former. The volumes of smoke which, in spite of legislation to the contrary, continually issue from factory chimneys, and form a complete cloud over Manchester, certainly make it less desirable as a place of residence than it is as a place of business ; and the enjoyment of the inhabitants would be greatly increased, could they breathe a purer atmosphere, and have a brighter and more frequent sight of the sun. But, to counterbalance the disadvantage, they have the privilege of walking unrestrainedly through the fine fields of the vicinity ; and thousands and tens of thousands, whose avocations render fresh air and exercise an absolute necessity of life, avail themselves of the right of footway through the meadows, and corn-fields, and parks in the immediate neighbourhood. There are so many pleasant footpaths, that a pedestrian might walk completely round the town in a circle, which would seldom exceed a radius of two miles from the Exchange, and in which he would scarcely ever have occasion to encounter the noise, bustle, and dust of a public cart road or paved street. The beautifully undulating country between the valley of the Irk and Cheetham Hill ; the fine valley of the Irwell, with its verdant meadows ; the slope from Pendleton to the plain,

which, commencing between the extremities of Hulme and Chorlton-upon-Medlock, extends south and west over the greater part of Cheshire; all this scenery, which in any country would be admired, but which has a hundred additional charms to him who is condemned, day after day, month after month, and year after year, to toil in the dirt and smoke of a great town—all this delightful scenery lies open to the pedestrian; and while he strays along through the open field, or wooded park, or the narrow and retired lane, and breathes the pure air of heaven, he feels that all these fields, and parks, and lanes, are as open to him, and to those who hang on his arm, or play by his side, as if they were his own, to have and to hold, as long as trees grow or water runs.

But there are “tyrants of the field”—men who imagine that that which runs through theirs must needs be theirs; and they must be withstood. About some twenty years before the period of which we write, a Mr. Ralph Wright, of Flixton, a parish a few miles south-west of Manchester, possessed an estate partly purchased and partly inherited, which had the usual complement of hedges, along which ran certain footways, and by which they were concealed from his house. Being desirous of giving to his property, which did not consist of more than fifteen or sixteen acres of land, a more park-like appearance, he levelled the hedges and fences; and finding that this brought the footways more in sight of his mansion, he began to use means to prevent the vulgar part of his neighbours coming between the wind and his nobility. One way, which went right across his little park, he shut up altogether, without the formality of any magistrate's order. Another, which formed part of a church road for several farm-houses, he diverted to a distance considerably farther from his house. To these encroachments his neighbours, unwilling to be thought quarrelsome, peaceably submitted; but another effort met with determined resistance: this was to divert the roads

to beyond the boundary of his own grounds, so that his property might not be traversed at all. He was a magistrate, and he obtained orders signed by two brother magistrates; but, without waiting for the confirmation of the orders at next quarter sessions, he stopped up the entrance to his grounds, ploughed up the old footway, and sowed the land with oats. Mr. Samuel Wood, a farmer in the parish, like the spirited old shoemaker of Bushy Park memory, was unwilling to leave the world worse than he found it, and, assisted by his neighbours, broke down three several times the obstructions that had been put up, and restored the original road to the public by treading down the oats.

The magistrate proceeded hesitatingly. In 1824 he obtained another order: this was appealed against; but when the applicants were ready with their witnesses it was abandoned. Another order immediately followed, but it was quashed on a point of form. A third order was more successful, being confirmed at the spring quarter sessions. All this was attended with expenses which were too heavy to be borne by a few persons of the class of country farmers. Thomas and Richard Potter had aided; but it was desirable that some association should be formed for the purpose of preventing this and similar encroachments, and removing from individuals the persecution to which they might be exposed in resisting the encroaching spirit of powerful country gentlemen. A meeting was accordingly held in the Town Hall, November the 15th, 1826, at which was formed a Society for the Preservation of Ancient Footpaths, and the following gentlemen were appointed a committee to carry its objects into effect:—

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Joseph Armstrong, | Edward Baxter, | Robert Hyde Greg, |
| Thomas Heywood, | Thomas Hilton, | John Kenworthy, |
| Edward J. Lloyd, | Robert Millington, | Richard Potter, |
| Archibald Prentice, | John Edward Taylor, | Robert Tebbutt. |
| J. B. Wanklyn, | George Wm. Wood, | |

A pleasant association this of Tories, Whigs, and Radicals,

and one which, in the successful results of its resistance in many attempted cases of encroachment, spread amongst the country gentlemen a wholesome terror of transgressing against the right of the poor to enjoy their own, without any one to make them afraid.

The Flixton people, having now the sanction and countenance of men holding at least as good a station in society as Ralph Wright, Esq., resolved to make another effort for the recovery of their right of road. They sued out. a *certiorari* and removed the case into the Court of King's Bench, and after many motions and counter-motions, the order of the sages of the quarter sessions for confirming the order to stop up the footways coveted by their brotherhood of the bench, was quashed; and on Monday, the 14th of June, 1827, several respectable inhabitants of Flixton, accompanied by some of the Manchester society, who were desirous of witnessing the renewal of a privilege of which the public had been for two years deprived, went in procession to open the roads, and the application of a saw gave them ingress to Mr. Wright's "park." The ground was covered with a very fine crop of grass, nearly ready to be cut; and the path, consequently, was not very obvious, but here and there it was indicated by the growth being shorter, and it was easily traced. The party having crossed the park, cut down the fences on the other side, and having thus asserted their and the public right, retired peaceably. I happened to arrive a minute or two after the procession had crossed the park, but, though I missed the satisfaction of seeing the unlawful impediments cut down, I experienced a higher pleasure in observing the fresh marks of the saw, the little two-feet wide opening, and the newly-made track through the tall grass, than such sights might be thought capable of giving. They spoke the triumph of an ancient law over the grasping and monopolising spirit of modern times. When I reached the middle of the large field which, by the destruction of two or three hedges, had been raised

into the dignity of a "park," I could not help being struck with the bad-taste, to speak of it in the gentlest terms, which sought a solitary greatness by the exclusion of every mark of rustic neighbourhood.

These contests cost the appellants nearly £600, and, as they must have been equally expensive to Mr. Ralph Wright, it might have been supposed that he would desist from any further attempt at encroachment. But the magistrate was bent upon his purpose, and on the 14th September four orders were signed by Robert Fielden and James Brierley, Esqrs., for stopping up these paths. The persecuted inhabitants of Flixton entered another appeal. It was tried at the quarter session, on Monday, October 29th, lasting nearly all day, and ending in the final discomfiture of Mr. Wright, but at a cost of £750 to the spirited vindicators of a public privilege.

I may have occasion again to mention other contests for right of road. In the meantime I may refer to one where the opposition to encroachment arose directly from the result of the Flixton case. About a mile from Bromsgrove resided a Dr. Collett, near whose house a footpath crossed between two parallel roads. About the year 1814, he, without any magistrate's order, diverted this cross pathway to a greater distance from his house, and formed a paddock on the site of the old pathway. Dr. Collett, having thus driven the public to some distance from him, now wished to drive them out of sight altogether. Mr. Wright wanted to have his "lawn" to himself, free from public gaze; and Dr. Collett wanted to have his "lawn" in exclusive sight as well as exclusive occupation. He found two clerical magistrates ready to forward his wishes—the Right Hon. and Rev. Walter Hutchinson, Lord Aston, and the Rev. William Vernon, who, on the 6th of June, 1827, signed an order to shut up the road as "useless and unnecessary." An appeal was made to the Worcestershire midsummer sessions, but the magistrates confirmed the order of their

clerical brethren. Mr. Ellins, one of the appellants, was not disposed to allow a public right to be lost. He had heard of the Flixton case, which much resembled his own; he visited Manchester; consulted Mr. Richard Potter; had Mr. Charles Wood, solicitor to the Footpaths' Protection Society, back with him to Worcestershire; and on the 20th of May, 1828, a motion in the Court of King's Bench, for quashing the order, came on to be heard. The order was quashed, on the ground that the reverend magistrates who signed it did not state, as the act required, that it having been on "view" found to be useless, it should be stopped, but "as it appeared" to them. The fact was, that they could not have viewed the road. The road ordered to be stopped was not the diverted but the old road, and to view it they must have broken through a garden wall, and cut through a plantation which had existed for fourteen years. At the opening of the road, on the 26th of May, a portion of the wall was razed to the ground, part of a greenhouse was destroyed. several of the trees in the plantation were cut down to the ground, and, as at Flixton, a procession was formed of public-spirited individuals, who exercised the rescued right, and rejoiced in the triumph of the law over the grasping designs of another "little tyrant of the field."

In the beginning of 1827, Mr. Thomas Burgess, one of the members of the "Footpaths' Protection Society," called my attention to another attempted encroachment, and I find the following notice of it in my *Gazette* of the 17th of February:—"Every inhabitant of Manchester must have observed, with some degree of pride, the wide and noble approach to the town from the Liverpool and great north road, and they will learn, with feelings of indignation, that the space between the houses and what is strictly the public road, from the Crescent to Pendleton Pole, has been, or is to be, leased by the chancellor of the duchy to an individual who will have it in his power to erect cottages in front of the elegant mansions which have been built in the faith

that his majesty, the Duke of Lancaster, would never permit that noble approach to be encroached upon. When so much has been expended in the purchase of old buildings to widen one short street in Manchester, we cannot mention, with any tolerable degree of patience, this permission to cover with buildings one of the finest outlets from this great town. We really think the officers of the duchy could not have devised any means more likely to make the chancellor unpopular; and it is astonishing to us, that any inhabitant of the township could be tempted, by any prospect of profit, to make a bargain which he must have known would be a most odious one in the eyes of his fellow townsmen. A meeting has been held at Pendleton, at which Mr. Burgess brought forward a draft to the chancellor on the subject, and at which Mr. G. Jones acknowledged, or rather avowed, that the lease conferring on him such odious powers was already granted. We trust, however, that the chancellor has it still in his power to arrest measures which, we are confident, our gracious sovereign, the Duke of Lancaster, would be sorry to permit against the wishes of the inhabitants of this, the second town in his kingdom." In addition to the Pendleton memorial, one was sent from the police commissioners of Salford, and the result was, that Lord Bexley, the chancellor of the duchy, refused to complete an arrangement into which he had been led by false representations of the nature of the property.

CHAPTER XIX.

CANNING'S CORN LAW.

THE necessity for a temporary suspension of the prohibitory corn law of 1815 had led to the belief that a ministry, of which Mr. Canning and Mr. Huskisson,* both professed free traders, were members, would frame a less restrictive measure, and the fears of the landlord class were greatly excited. Before the opening of the parliamentary session in 1827, petitions from the agricultural districts were manufactured with untiring assiduity, and eagerly signed by frightened farmers, who had been persuaded that, instead of any relaxation of the monopoly, a positive exclusion of all foreign corn was scarcely protection enough. The outcry was so loud as to make the opponents of the corn law believe that some really important reform was coming. They could not suppose that all this hubbub was for nothing, and the manufacturing districts, seeking, besides, a breathing time after the harassments of 1826, remained perfectly quiescent. Here and there, indeed, the public voice against the corn monopoly found feeble utterance; here and there were a few radicals who thought and said that a bitter enemy to fair and free representation could not be the honest friend of free trade; but our manufacturers remained in the quiet and undisturbed reliance that ministers would follow the course which humanity and policy dictated. The measure, so much dreaded by the landowners, and anticipated by the manufacturers with so much reliance on ministerial honesty and wisdom, was framed on the assumption that when wheat was at 60s. a quarter, the home grower should receive a protection to the amount of 20s. The professed free traders, Canning and

Huskisson, proceeding on this assumption, fixed 60s. as their *pivot*, increasing their duty as prices diminished; so that when wheat was at 50s. the duty should be 40s., but diminishing it as prices advanced, so that at 70s. wheat should come in free. With what reason the corn growers might congratulate themselves on their clamorous activity, and the corn consumers might bitterly lament their supineness, under an ill-founded reliance that ministers would do that which *they* did not think it worth their while to ask them to do,—with what reason the one class might exult and the other might mourn, may be judged by the fact that, immediately on the publication of Mr. Canning's long-promised and anxiously-looked-for resolutions, wheat experienced an advance of 5s. a quarter. The bitterness of my own feelings, on seeing the result of a blind reliance on ministerial honesty, found vent in the following remarks:—

“On the back of proposals for such an alteration of the laws as would give relief to the corn consumer, we have the records of every market in the kingdom announcing an advance of prices, and becoming so many libels upon the proposers of this scheme, and proclaiming to a half-bankrupt and half-starved people, that their reliance on ministerial firmness was miserably misplaced. What a commentary on Mr. Canning's vaunted no-drought and no-deluge scheme do the reports of the corn markets furnish. ‘A greater degree of liveliness,’ say the market historians, ‘was experienced to-day, in consequence of the prices at which grain may be imported being fixed higher than was expected. Wheat rose five shillings a quarter, and a further improvement may be expected.’ Well, indeed, might they anticipate an improvement, when they knew that, according to the new corn law scheme, wheat could not be imported without the payment of a duty of thirty-four shillings a quarter—a duty which would make the English consumer pay a shilling for every sixpence-worth of foreign flour.

“While we are compelled to say that ministers have miserably disappointed the hopes which were founded on their own declarations, we must add that the people in the manufacturing districts are not without blame. They knew not only that they were without representatives in parliament, but that it was constituted almost entirely of those who had an interest in preserving the corn monopoly un-

broken. They knew that ministers had no influence to oppose to that of the land-owners but what was derived from public opinion. Yet, knowing this,—knowing that an almost overwhelming force was to be contended with, they permitted week after week, and month after month to slip away, without giving ministers the aid of their unequivocally declared opinions, and thus left them no alternative but to yield to the stronger power, or relinquish their places. This supineness is the more to be regretted, when we consider that it was not the result of indifference as to the decision of the momentous question whether food was to be dear or cheap. There was but one opinion prevailing, and that was, that our very existence as a manufacturing and commercial nation depended upon our being placed on something like an equality with other nations with regard to the necessaries of life. This was the opinion, but unfortunately it did not receive the public expression which it ought to have received; and though men's hearts burned within them when they thought the people were starving while there was abundance of food upon the earth, a full public utterance was not given to their opinions and feelings.

"In endeavouring to account for this indifference as to the public expression of what every man felt, we are led to think that it might be occasioned by too great a reliance on the public journals. The tory press, whatever it might say concerning the corn laws, has always discountenanced public meetings; and, unfortunately, toryism in the press has no better opponent than it has in parliament. Your whig editor is like your whig member, a creature of mere shifts and expedients; and while he can suggest some palliative, will not recommend an effectual remedy, and will even then throw obstacles in its way. That we do not unfairly characterise the public press will be confessed, when it is recollected that the most unequivocal expression of public opinion which was ever made in Manchester was effected by this paper, not merely unaided, but opposed by all its contemporaries.

"When a blunder has been committed, no time ought to be lost in rectifying it. The landed interest has been permitted to get before the manufacturing interest in their representations in parliament; but the resolutions so favourable to them, and so obnoxious to us, are not yet become a part of the laws; and a strong expression of the opinion which prevails in the manufacturing districts might even yet be effectual in procuring the modifications which justice and policy demand."

The strong expression of opinion thus earnestly called for was not made. The bill was passed in the Commons by

a large majority ; but in the Lords the Duke of Wellington, after a clever manœuvre, by which he entrapped the simple Mr. Huskisson to a seeming approval of his movement, succeeded in carrying an amendment which went, in effect, to the destruction of the measure as one of comparative relief from the acts of 1815 and 1822, which had been almost entirely prohibitory. Ministers could not, with any show of decency, press their measure any further, and it was accordingly withdrawn, to be followed by one on the following year, framed in accordance with the Duke's opinions as to the amount of protection. Probably the adroit diplomacy by which poor Huskisson was made to appear as giving his sanction to an amendment which destroyed his and Canning's bill, may have suggested to Wellington that he, the F. M., was not destitute of the kind of knowledge which fits a man for the office of prime minister, when a peculiar kind of left-handed wisdom is more required than statesmanship.

While lords and commons, whigs and tories, seemed to think or to act upon the opinion, whether they believed it to be true or false, that to prevent the price of corn from falling too low was a very proper object of legislation, it was edifying to read their replies to the starving workmen who prayed that something should be done to prevent wages from falling too low. The Bolton weavers petitioned that a power should be given to boards of trade, consisting of the most extensive manufacturers in each district, to regulate the prices of weaving ; but, in reply to this application, they were told that it would be very improper in the legislature to interfere in contracts between the workman and his employer. It was quite necessary and proper, said our law-makers, to regulate the price of corn, but to attempt to regulate the price of labour would be at variance with every principle of sound political economy. There was no disinclination to teach sound principles when practice upon such principles took nothing out of their pockets.

Mr. Canning's elevation, in the summer of 1827, to the position of prime minister, gave satisfaction to neither of the extreme parties in Manchester. The tories hated him for his approaches towards liberalism; the radicals distrusted him because he was still an obstructive. The friends of "protestant ascendancy" regarded him with a bitter scowl because he purposed to remove the disabilities under which the catholics suffered; the friends of religious liberty gave him no credit for sincerity, for he was still opposed to the repeal of the test and corporation acts. The favourers of continental absoluteism looked with alarm to acts tending to withdraw England from the influence of the "holy alliance;" but reformers were told, and with a fiercely defiant air, that, though he would not succumb to despotical dictation abroad, he would strenuously support the unmitigated rule of the aristocracy and the borough-mongers at home. The landowners raised a furious outcry against his modified support of free-trade doctrines; a considerable part of the manufacturers, and almost all their workmen, looked on his corn bill as a proof that he was a determined supporter of the corn growers' monopoly. And yet this was a great era—a pivot period on which the progressive and the stand-still policy stood vibrating, few knowing in what direction the turn might be made. The middle class reformers, with whom I acted, were hopeful that some successful innovation might be made on traditional usages of government, and I believe that I expressed their opinions when I said our hope arose from the belief that a government constituted like that of Mr. Canning would be influenced by public opinion, when that was unequivocally and boldly expressed, and that any movement it might make in advance would encourage the people to bolder demands; and that thus the reciprocal action of government upon the people, and of the people upon the government, would lead to the recognition of principles from which almost all classes of men in parliament had hitherto recoiled.

When the success of the Duke of Wellington's amendment in the Lords threatened to be fatal to the proposed "amendment" of the corn law, and to throw the country back upon it in its unmitigated rigour, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce made a languid movement; that chamber, then behind public opinion, and continuing behind it until December, 1838, when it aroused itself, after a long sleep, met on the 27th of June. Mr. Hugh Hornby Birley in the chair. Mr. George William Wood, seconded by Mr. Shakspeare Phillips, moved, "That the chamber was of opinion that though the bill proposed a scale of protecting duties higher than sound policy suggested, and the welfare of the general interests of the country required, it was, nevertheless, founded upon just and salutary principles, and would tend to mitigate the evils of the existing corn laws." I could not recognise, as a just and salutary principle, the imposition of a forty-shilling tax on the importation of wheat when its price was fifty, and I moved an amendment that the words should be "more just and salutary than the existing law." There were 15 votes for my amendment, and 16 against it. Had I imagined that opinion was so nearly balanced I should have taken more pains than I did, but I committed the mistake of believing that the chamber was too conservative to allow a free-trade to carry any resolution. When the petition, founded on the resolutions, was read, I moved again that the qualifying comparison should be used, and was supported by Mr. Robert Garnett, who had previously voted against me. I now thought that there would be a majority of one in my favour, but Mr. John Edward Taylor, of the *Guardian*, who had voted for me, turned round and voted against me, on the ground that the resolution and the prayer of the petition ought to agree. The closeness of these divisions betokened a change in the opinions of that very timid association, although many years elapsed before Cobden, Bright, Smith, Ashworth, Bazley, and others of

progressive movement principles, took the place of men who would put forth all their energy to have a quarter of an hour's earlier delivery of letters, but who would not put out their little finger to lighten the heavy burthens imposed by selfish legislation.

A public meeting was held in the Town Hall, on the 5th of July, at which Mr. G. W. Wood made a good speech against the existing law, but confessed he would have been almost satisfied had Mr. Canning's bill been passed. Mr. John Shuttleworth did not so much approve of that measure as to be much mortified by its defeat. "The fate," he said, "which has attended the project, such as it is, shows, more decidedly than the loss of a stronger and better measure would, the necessity there is for increasing the influence and power of those who, with good intention have used it, by every demonstration of popular support." Mr. J. C. Dyer wished to see the population of his country, not as half-starved paupers, but as well-clothed, well-fed, and contented artizans; and if they were permitted freely to import cheap food, he was confident that this would be their state, and that their prosperity would go on increasing and bid defiance to the competition of the world. Mr. Richard Potter made an effective speech on the occasion, and, in allusion to a phrase used in the House of Lords, he said, "Lord Grey, and I regret, and you must all regret that such language should have been used by such a man, has hinted that a repetition of language calculated to bring the 'order' to which he belongs into contempt or disrepute, might subject the parties to banishment, but such a threat will be treated by the country with the contempt which it deserves. If, however, his lordship and the 'order,' by which he says he will stand or fall, should proceed to extremities, I trust, nay, I am sure, there will be men found in the country, yes, in this room, ready to stand up for the rights of the people." Mr. Robert Hyde Greg ably exposed the fallacies by which the members of the landed aristocracy

attempted to defend their monopoly, and said that the lords, whenever the question of the corn laws came before them, seemed suddenly deprived of common sense, common policy, common honesty, common decorum, and common humanity. Mr. Greg concluded by quoting the lines written by Lord Byron, so often afterwards used during the anti-corn-law agitation, and so much to the annoyance of the landed interest:—

“And will they not repay the treasures lent?

No! Down with everything and up with rent!

Their good, ill, health, wealth, joy, and discontent,

Aim, being, and religion,—rent, rent, rent!!”

The resolutions passed at this public meeting did not, like those of the Chamber of Commerce, recognise, as just and salutary, the principle of Mr. Canning's bill, but they did not denounce, but rather approved, the principle of a moderate fixed duty, and I believe the free-traders of that day would have considered the imposition of an eight-shilling fixed duty as a fair compromise between the agricultural and the commercial interests. But Mr. Canning, bitterly as he was denounced as an enemy to the protection of agriculture, had neither the wish nor the power to effect so great a change, and was now rapidly approaching the time when he was to find refuge in the grave from the hatred of an aristocracy whose fears he had alarmed and whose hatred he had incurred, without gaining any confidence and sympathy from the multitude, whose miseries he had mocked and whose claims for justice he had insultingly derided.

Amusing instances—if bitter rancour can ever amuse—of intolerant feeling occurred at all the Pitt dinners of this “pivot” period. At one of their celebrations, held at Warrington, the chairman, the Rev. Peter Leigh, said that Mr. Canning was one of the greatest political swindlers of the day, and one who would take advice from every dirty radical, insane theorist, and mongrel whig; that he was a

political Judas, who would prove the greatest curse that ever had afflicted any country; that if ever there was a name in England that deserved public execration, it was that of George Canning; and that he hoped the king would spurn from his councils that despicable truckler—that political profligate—and that Pitt's principles might again rule the British cabinet. The reverend orator concluded by calling upon his clerical friends present “not to cut the faggots on which they themselves and their church stood a tolerable chance of being devilled.” All this abuse was lavished because Canning was in favour of Catholic Emancipation. His determined support of the Test and Corporation Act, and his intolerance towards dissent gained him no favour in the eyes of those whose protestantism consisted in protesting against any invasion of their sinecures and pluralities. Wellington and Peel, in their eyes, were the never-to-yield champions of the protestant faith. In less than a year these same champions had repealed the Test and Corporation Act, and in less than another had granted Catholic Emancipation.

In this transitive period we were, for a brief time, allowed to entertain the hope that our great unrepresented town would have the privilege of sending two members to parliament. One of the rotten boroughs had permitted its rottenness to be somewhat too openly exhibited, and so much virtuous indignation was expressed that it might have been supposed, by the uninitiated, that corruption was only the exception and not the rule. Fortunately our expectations were disappointed—fortunately, because, if ministers had possessed even the left-handed wisdom of cunning, they would have granted the Penryn seats to Manchester one year, and East Retford seats to Birmingham in another, and thus have spread over fifty years the demolition effected at once by the 1832 bill, and have gained for themselves the credit of being progressive reformers, slow but sure, occupying the just medium between

the obstructives and the destructives, between finality and radicalism. In April, 1827, Penryn having been discovered to be not immaculate, Lord John Russell gave notice, that if it were disfranchised he would move that its seats should be transferred to Manchester, and Lord Stanley sent a communication to that effect to the boroughreeve and constables, our then head municipal authorities. This created considerable excitement, the tories and whigs agreeing in opinion that the commerce of Manchester would derive advantage from direct representation, and more decided reformers being eager that there should be some beginning, some starting point, to an amendment of that strange representative system which gave no member to Manchester and two to the little village of Newton, and two to some mounds of earth at Old Sarum. The reformers, seeing that the tories and whigs were disposed to move for this instalment of reform, resolved to let those two parties have the lead in managing the matter, and held back their own signatures to the requisition to call a public meeting till the signatures of more cautious politicians were secured. I subjoin some of the names which appeared in the requisition—names which probably never afterwards were brought into such friendly contiguity of fellowship:—

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| John Barton, | George Wm. Wood, | Shakspeare Phillips, |
| R. W. Barton, | Robert Garnett, | John Touchet, |
| H. H. Birley, | William Garnett, | E. J. Lloyd, |
| Thomas Ashton, | Jeremiah Fielding, | Samuel Barton, |
| Edmund Wright, | Thomas Hoyle, | Edward Tootal, |
| John Kennedy, | T. Harbottle, | H. Bannerman, |
| James Burt, | R. H. Greg, | R. Christie, |
| B. H. Heywood, | Daniel Grant, | John Runcorn, |
| Henry Newbery, | Charles Cross, | Isaac Hately, |
| Benjamin Heywood, | F. A. Phillips, | Benjamin Braidley, |
| G. R. Chappell, | James Wood, | Robert Stewart, |
| James Kershaw, | W. Callender, | Richard Potter, |
| Alexander Kay, | James Beardoe, | William Harvey, |
| Thomas Potter, | William Haynes, | J. E. Taylor, |
| Thomas Entwistle, | Archibald Prentice, | Edward Connell, |

The meeting, called by George Neden, boroughreeve, and Michael Harbottle and David Bannerman, constables, was held in the unplastered large room of the Town Hall. The first resolution was proposed by Mr. H. H. Birley, the commander, in 1819, of the yeomanry corps which had cut down the people peaceably assembled to petition for reform. He said he wished to see the manufacturing interests better represented. Mr. G. W. Wood, seconding the motion, took nearly the same ground, and his complaint was not so much of the narrowness of the suffrage as of the exclusion of the manufacturing towns. Out of 658 members in the House of Commons, he said, there were only nine connected with the manufacturing interest. Mr. William Garnett, in moving the second resolution, spoke only of the importance of the cotton trade, and then argued the necessity of its being represented. Mr. R. H. Greg, and Mr. Richard Potter, both spoke very briefly, the understanding being that reformers should let the work be done by others not previously known as desiring progression. The resolutions were all passed unanimously, but a division arose upon the nomination of a committee, from which the names of persons supposed to be tainted with radicalism had been excluded:—

“*Mr. Thomas Hoyle* proposed that the following gentlemen be appointed a committee to carry the resolutions into effect, viz.,—the boroughreeve and constables and churchwardens of Manchester; Messrs. H. H. Birley, G. W. Wood, Shakspeare Philips, John Barton, William Garnett, John Kennedy, Thomas Entwistle, R. H. Greg, Benjamin Heywood, G. Winter, John Kirkinan, Henry Newbery, Thomas Heywood, John Runcorn, Isaac Faulkner, John Chippendall, William Crie, and Thomas Worthington.—*Mr. Prentice* begged leave to say a few words before the resolution was put. He had been extremely glad to observe the unanimity which had hitherto prevailed in the meeting, and it had given him great satisfaction to see the requisition signed by persons who, as Mr. Wood had remarked, were of every grade of political opinion. But he had no hesitation in saying, that the committee which had been proposed did not fairly represent the requisitionists. (Hear, hear, hear.) In order, there-

fore, that the committee, like the requisitionists, should comprise persons of all political opinions, he proposed that the names of Mr. T. Harbottle, Mr. Edward Baxter, Mr. John Edward Taylor, Mr. John Shuttleworth, Mr. Richard Potter, and Mr. F. R. Atkinson, be added to the list which had been proposed by Mr. Hoyle. (The announcement of these names was received with loud applause.)—*Mr. George Hadfield* seconded the amendment. He said he was desirous that the committee should be composed of individuals of every opinion in politics, as it was desirable that all parties should be unanimous; and he thought that unanimity would be best secured by the cordial co-operation of persons who represented the various opinions of the inhabitants.—*Mr. Candeleit* proposed that Mr. Prentice's name should be added to the list.—The amended list, with this addition, was carried by a majority of ten to one."

The prayer of the petition was, "that whenever circumstances render it practicable, your honourable house, in conjunction with the other branches of the legislature, will be pleased to extend representation to the town of Manchester, and such other townships of the parish as form, in fact, part of the town. Your petitioners, however, anxious that in their case and by their successors, the elective privilege should be purely, independently, and constitutionally exercised, do further pray, that if it shall please your honourable house to accede to this urgent request, such regulations may be prescribed with respect to the mode of election, as shall effectually, and at all times prevent the tumult, delay, and expense by which elections for populous places are too often attended."

It will be seen that the petition bore no reference to the qualification of voters. It was thought desirable to do no more than to convince the legislature that Manchester was willing to accept representation, for even willingness to that extent was denied, by a member of parliament who rejoiced in the name of Mr. Lee Keek. A number of the gentlemen appointed on the committee were supposed to be favourable to the formation of a constituency of all who paid £20 a year and upwards, and there were not wanting plausible

reasons, in the then state of representation, in favour of that qualification. In Glasgow, the fourth part of a member was elected by a corporation consisting of thirty councillors, themselves self-elected. Compared with that mockery, a constituency of 4,000 occupiers to the amount of £20 and upwards, would seem to offer some guarantee for an independent and judicious choice. East Retford was found to be not less corrupt than Penryn; and Mary-le-bone, Glasgow, Birmingham, and Leeds came into competition for the seats. Glasgow seemed disposed to compromise for a member by offering to confine the voting to freeholders within the city. There seemed an excellent opportunity of selling seats to the large towns on the principle of the Dutch auction. But fortunately the spirit of obstruction to all reform was rampant, and the penny was clutchingly withheld to the loss of the pound.

On the 23rd of April, in the following year, a meeting was held to pass the constables' accounts, in which appeared the sum of £69 as paid to a deputation from the Manchester committee to confer with Lord John Russell on the transfer of seats. On the motion that the accounts do pass, I moved, seconded by Mr. Candlet, that the accounts do pass, with the exception of £69, on the ground that the deputation had assumed a power which had not been delegated to them when they bargained for an exclusive suffrage. I said that when Mr. Harbottle had proposed that a deputation should be sent to London, it was on the ground that an immediate representation should be made of the great importance of this town, and of the necessity of its interests being represented in parliament; that this had not been done, but at a period long subsequent to that meeting, the committee had sent its deputation, not for the general object, but in order to traffic for a bill which denied to an inhabitant a vote unless he was assessed on a rent of £20 a year. equal to an actual rent of £25 or £30 a year. Could any one, I asked, who was present at that meeting

ever have supposed that he was sanctioning that which would exclude so large a portion of the inhabitants, possessing a large amount of the intelligence and respectability of the town? Mr. Jeremiah Garnet attempted to get rid of the amendment, by saying that Mr. Prentice himself had been favourable to a £20 qualification, to which my reply was, that whatever my opinion might have been, it did not justify a bargain with parliament for the exclusion of so large a portion of my fellow-townsmen. The amendment was carried.

The bill for the disfranchisement of Penryn was ultimately lost in the House of Lords on June 23rd, 1828. The proceedings were thus briefly reported in my newspaper of the time :—

“The *Earl of Carnarvon* moved the second reading of the Penryn Disfranchisement Bill. His lordship proceeded to comment on the evidence at considerable length, and concluded by stating that, in his opinion, it did not warrant him in moving that the franchise of the borough should be absolutely annihilated, by its transference to some other place, but it was sufficiently decided to make it imperative on their lordships to adopt some course to prevent the recurrence of the bribery shown to have existed for so many years.—The *Lord Chancellor (Lyndhurst)* said, after attending daily to the evidence, and after a subsequent perusal of it, he was satisfied that the further progress of the measure ought to be resisted. From the evidence it appeared that there were 420 voters, and he defied the noble lord to show that bribery had been brought home to more than fourteen; and even three of these instances depended upon admissions, and not actually upon testimony under the sanction of an oath.—*Lord De Dunstanville* remarked that it had been said, that as he possessed considerable property in the neighbourhood of Penryn, it would give him a decided power in influencing the elections, should this bill pass. But he was convinced that the independence of the freeholders there, especially of the substantial yeoman, was such that if all the men of rank were to unite their influence in favour of one candidate, and a popular candidate were to start, he would beat their united strength immediately. In his opinion no case had been made out, either in law or equity, to justify the present bill.—The *Earl of Eldon* said he had never seen a case so utterly destitute of foundation.—*Lord*

Daere said he was no friend of these wild doctrines of reform that would establish universal suffrage, or even householders' suffrage, in every case, for he did not think that any one uniform principle of voting could ever be adopted; but as the object of this bill was to transfer the franchise to the commercial from the landed interest, he should certainly oppose it.—The *Marquis of Salisbury* called the attention of their lordships to the words of the preamble of the bill. They ran in this form: 'Whereas, on account of the great wealth and population of Manchester, it is expedient that it should return burgesses to parliament.' Now, in that single sentence were embodied all the wildest doctrines of reform. If there were no other grounds for opposition, he should oppose this bill on that ground alone. As no other noble lord had objected to the bill on that ground, he had determined to enter his protest against such doctrines being smuggled into a bill to ruin the constitution.—The *Earl of Carnarvon* observed, that, as he saw the general opinion of the house was against the bill, he would not press it to a division, but would withdraw it."

And thus the effort for gradual reform was frustrated, and fortunately, for the "gradual" progress would have been much the same as standing still. There were many members of both houses who thought with Lord Salisbury, though they did not speak out so plainly, that to regard wealth and population as a claim to representation, was one of the wildest doctrines of reform, and that its practical recognition would lead to the utter ruin of the constitution.

CHAPTER XX.

MUNICIPAL AGITATIONS.

CONSIDERABLE dissatisfaction had for several years been manifested by a portion of the inhabitants of Manchester with the management of its municipal affairs. There was no elective authority in the town. The boroughreeve, who, by ancient custom rather than of right, exercised the functions of a mayor, and the constables, who were at the head of the day police, were elected at the lord of the manor's court leet, by a jury nominated by the lord of the manor's steward. The police commissioners, whose duties were to superintend the night-watch, and the paving, sewerage, and lighting of the town, consisted of such persons as being assessed upon a £30 rental, chose to come forward and take the oath of office. The inhabitants had no control over the first class of officers, and they had long shown themselves as anxious to apprehend radicals and put down reform principles as to detect thieves and prevent theft and robbery. The police commissioners, abetted by the court leet officers, were, in like manner, apt to forget municipal duties in political; and there was a suspicion that, provided their servants and the tradesmen they employed were sufficiently loyal, there would not be a very sharp inspection of their accounts. Amongst the complainants were Mr. Chapman, a fruiterer; Mr. Nicholas Whitworth and Mr. William Whitworth, corn dealers; Mr. P. T. Candelet, a draper; Mr. John Dracup, a draper, and several other commissioners who, even at the risk of personal violence, kept rooting after abuses, and succeeded in bringing to light some things which certainly looked very like jobs; for instance, it was discovered that each horse kept by the

commissioners, in addition to a fair allowance of *corn*, consumed *bran* to the amount of forty shillings' worth a week. Additional sources of dissatisfaction arose when gas became a necessary to the shopkeepers. The commissioners had, very wisely, established gas works, instead of leaving the supply to any joint stock company. They borrowed money to erect the works and put down the mains, repaid it out of profits derived, and borrowed more when the works needed extension; and thus they obtained a large amount of clear income, to be expended in public improvements, without the assessment of the inhabitants to the amount of a single farthing. But, in the early stages of the manufacture, there was reason for complaint that improvements, as well as the lighting of the town, to which the whole community ought to have contributed, were effected out of the pockets of the gas consumers. At the time the consumption of gas was confined almost to the shopkeepers and publicans. It was not used in warehouses, offices, or dwelling-houses, or small factories, and the large spinning establishments made their own. Probably, not one-fourth of the ratepayers were gas consumers. The small trader, whose shop, situated in some dark narrow street, required much artificial light, complained that the enormous warehouses of the Bridgewater Trust, and the great factories of the Birleys, the M'Connells, the Murrays, and the Houldsworths, paid nothing towards the supply of the town's lamps with gas, while the whole of that cost was defrayed out of the profits derived from excessively high prices. A struggle was made by those who believed themselves to be unduly taxed, to have a reduction of the burthen. Those who escaped from this fair share of contribution, and thought that the gas consumers paid only a reasonable price for their light, opposed themselves fiercely to any reduction of the charge, which at that time, was fourteen shillings per thousand cubic feet. The question became one almost of politics, and it was discussed with even more than political

rancour. The taxed shopkeeper was the radical, and the untaxed warehouseman was the conservative. The reformers, beaten on every division, began to ask accessions to their numbers, and as everybody who was assessed upon a rental of £30 a year was eligible, it was not difficult to persuade many to go and take the qualifying oath, and gain the opportunity of putting a check to "oppression." The same facility was presented to the other side, and great numbers qualified to protect the town's funds from "spoliation." Thus the meetings of commissioners were constantly becoming more numerous and more stormy, till it was not an uncommon thing to see eight hundred commissioners present at a meeting, and to witness proceedings as little deliberative and decorous as we sometimes see in the front of the hustings on the nomination day at a contested election.

At a meeting held on the 30th of January, 1828, at which about 900 commissioners were present, it was intended, by the advocates for a reduction in the price of gas, to submit a motion that it should be reduced, so as to leave a clear profit of £4,000 per annum, to be applied either to the reduction of the rates or the improvement of the town; but it was soon seen that there was little disposition on the opposite side to come to any amicable arrangement. It was moved that the boroughreeve, Mr. Charles Cross, should take the chair; but Mr. W. Whitworth objected, on the ground that Mr. Cross had not acted impartially at the previous meeting, and moved that Mr. Candelet should take the chair. It then became a question whether the election should be by ballot or by show of hands, and Mr. Oswald Milne put that question to the meeting, and declared that the majority was in favour of the ballot; on which Mr. Hugh Hornby Birley demanded a scrutiny, which was effected with difficulty, great delay, and much uncertainty, and then the votes were declared to be—for the ballot, 418; against it, 463. The question then became whether Mr.

Cross or Mr. Candelet should be chairman, and it was put to the meeting by Mr. O. Milne, who declared that the majority was in favour of Mr. Cross. Mr. W. Whitworth, following the example of Mr. Birley, then proposed a scrutiny, and that it should be taken from the police books, as he was convinced that of the names given in last there were many of persons who were not commissioners, as well as of persons who were not in the room at all. Preliminary to the scrutiny, tickets were handed round to obtain the names of all the persons in the room, that they might be compared with the list of commissioners. The tickets having all been handed in, soon after half-past one o'clock, Mr. Milne got on the table, and said he would announce the result of the scrutiny. "Nay, not the scrutiny," said Mr. John Gyte; "there has been no scrutiny yet; and the meeting understands that the scrutiny is to be made by comparing the names handed in with the names on the book." Mr. Milne paid no attention to this, and said, "The result of the voting is that there are 520 for the boroughreeve, and 386 against him, and I declare that he is elected chairman. Mr. Cross, take the chair." Mr. Whitworth and all of his supporters within hearing protested against this, and said that the scrutiny should be taken in the way that had been agreed upon, and as the meeting had been given to understand it should be taken; but, as I was informed by several gentlemen who witnessed the transaction (for I was at the table below the hustings), Mr. Milne, instead of paying any attention to their protest, or to his own previous agreement, hurriedly held out his hand to Mr. Cross, who was at some distance, in order to pull him towards the table, over the heads of the commissioners who stood on the hustings. He was resisted in this attempt by their standing closely together, and Mr. Whitworth called out, "Don't let him into the chair until a fair scrutiny is made; keep him out." On this there was an outcry, "Put him in"—"Keep him out;" and a general rush to the hustings from both sides of

the room took place. As the commissioners either could not or would not make way, Mr. Cross, who was standing upon a chair near the wall, put one foot on the shoulder of a gentleman before him, and seemed disposed in this way to reach the table ; but the gentleman shifted a little to one side, and Mr. Cross, being unable to reach the table with his foot, slipped down. A cry immediately rose that he had been thrown down on purpose, and the confusion was increased, one party crying out that he was obstructed by force, and another that he had no right to be in the chair. Mr. Whitworth, who had been on the table in front of the hustings, then got over the railing, about the time when the boroughreeve had recovered his footing, and called out, " He has no right to be in the chair ; keep him out." Mr. Milne then stood forward, and called out loudly and repeatedly for constables, and said that if any one would get a warrant, he would swear that Mr. Whitworth had committed an assault, and had urged on his party to acts of violence. The noise now was appalling, and the pressure towards the hustings, to see what was going on, was so great, that imminent danger from the collision of the parties was to be apprehended. At this period of the proceedings, fearing, from Mr. Milne's reiterated vociferations, that the boroughreeve's personal safety was endangered, I jumped over the railing into the hustings, and going up to the boroughreeve, said, " Mr. Cross, I have on all occasions opposed your being chairman of these meetings, but I cannot sanction violence, and the man who assaults you assaults me." But a few seconds' observation showed me that Mr. Cross was in no danger, for he was sitting calmly on the table, and on this address he smiled and said, " Oh, I am neither afraid nor hurt." Indeed all around the table was quiet, but several combats were going on at the extremities of the hustings, arising, as far as I could judge, from disputes as to who began the disturbance. On the left of the table a young man, a clerk, as I was told, in the

constables' office, who had been desired to take a Mr. Wilde into custody, was laying about him furiously and indiscriminately with a constable's staff, and, in the efforts to moderate his zeal, several contests arose, in one of which Mr. Norris, of Marsden-square, was in some danger of being treated roughly. On the other side of the table a zealot of the conservative school tore off from the upper part of the hustings a piece of wood, five or six feet long, and three or four inches thick, and brandishing it aloft, swore that he would settle his opponents; but some considerate friend forcibly dispossessed him of his formidable weapon. In front of the hustings Mr. Richard Smith was engaged in a contest with a commissioner who had called him a liar; but some one having said, "Why, Mr. Smith, that is the usual language here," he quitted hold of his antagonist's collar, and, with great good humour, let the matter drop. A very serious accident, however, befel one commissioner, Mr. Evans, of Anecoats-street, who, though standing at several yards' distance from the boroughreeve, and taking no part in the disturbance, was accused of being opposed to him, and, without any ceremony, was hurled from the hustings with such violence that he was driven head foremost against a sharp angle of one of the fluted columns, and received a wound which, at first sight, seemed to be mortal, but which was more frightful in appearance than dangerous.

This riot gave great satisfaction to the opponents of local reform, and it was soon seen what use they intended to make of it. The tory *Courier* said:—"If the affairs of the town are to be conducted, as heretofore, by the whole body of police commissioners, the qualification ought to be raised from £30 to £50;" adding, "we are glad to find that a statement of all the circumstances of the outrages at the Town Hall have been forwarded to the secretary of state." The whig *Guardian* took the same course, saying:—"We fear the occurrences which have taken place at several of

the late meetings, render the conclusion irresistible, that a new constitution of the body of the police commissioners has become absolutely necessary." The tory *Chronicle* stated that there were then 1,800 commissioners, and said: "It is now become obvious to every respectable resident in Manchester, that some change must be sought for in the mode of conducting its public business." This change had been long desired by those who did not find it work so pleasantly as when a few conservative gentlemen had the business all in their own hands. In the meantime it was thought advisable to take legal proceedings against Mr. Whitworth, who was brought before the magistrates, charged with riot and assault, and after a long examination he was required to enter into his own recognizance in £200, and to find two sureties in £100 each to answer the charge at the sessions. Mr. George Hargreaves Winder, druggist, and Mr. Peter Turner Candelet, draper, entered into the required recognizances. The prosecution came to nothing, unless its instigators regarded it as something that they put Mr. Whitworth to a considerable amount of expense.

The hints as to the necessity of a change in the constitution of the police body were soon acted upon. In the papers of February the 23rd appeared a requisition to the churchwardens, to call a meeting of the rate-payers to consider the propriety of applying to parliament for an act to *confer* on all occupiers assessed to the police-rate, at the amount of £25 per annum, the right of voting in the choice of 240 commissioners from amongst those who might be assessed at the amount of £35 per annum. The principal names at the head of the requisition were—

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| H. H. Birley, | Joseph Green, | Edmund Buckley, |
| George Neden, | Thomas Hardman, | Henry Newbury, |
| Thomas Entwisle, | Charles Cross, | William Garnett, |
| James Beardoe, | Richard Warren, | Thomas Sowler. |
| J. B. Wanklyn, | Benjamin Braidley, | |

and a number of others who had been boroughreeves, or constables, or commissioners, or churchwardens, or sidesmen, in quieter times, when humble men did as they were bidden by men in higher commercial station than themselves. Amongst the names were mingled those of Mr. George William Wood, Mr. John Edward Taylor, Mr. Daniel Broadhurst, and other whig gentlemen who leaned a little more to the gentlemanly quietness of conservatism than to the rough turbulence of radicalism. The meeting was a stormy one, as might have been expected, when the object was to consider a proposal which went to exclude all who paid a rent of less than about £32 10s. (equivalent to an assessment on £25), from a vote in the choice of commissioners. The resolutions proposed at the meeting were rejected by a majority of ten to one. It was then seen why the churchwardens, parish officers, rather than the borough-reeve, a township officer, had been invited to call the meeting. At parish meetings the voting was under Sturges Bourne's Act, which gave power to an individual, up to six votes, according to the amount of assessment. The churchwarden, in his chair in the Collegiate Church, for, with the same design the meeting was held there, decided that the voting on this township affair should be under the Parish Vestry Act, and on the call for a poll, decided that it should then and there commence. Mr. Shuttleworth then stood forward on the table and was received with loud cheers. He said that, "though he was convinced, from the astounding majority which the show of hands had exhibited, that those who were opposed to any present application to parliament would be equally victorious under the Vestry Act, yet as he considered the voting under that act to be, under the circumstances illegal, and the intention now declared of enforcing it, one of the most discreditable tricks, even in the contentions of party, he had ever witnessed in public proceedings; and as he was also convinced by the violation of all fairness in the spirit with which the measure was

pressed forward, that those who had undertaken it would, in defiance of any majority of their townsmen against it, however taken and however recorded, still proceed with it to parliament,—he would advise those who were opposed to it to do as he would do—take their hats and their leave together and walk off. The battle must be fought before a committee of the House of Commons; and the public of Manchester had so deep a stake in the conflict that they must prepare for the defence of their rights and interests in that field with the most determined energy and spirit. Time must be devoted, money must be raised, arrangements must be made without delay. If the public exerted themselves as they ought, the town would not be injured and disgraced by a police bill, founded upon what he could not but characterise as insulting, unjust, and factious principles. These observations were received with loud cheering, and Mr. Shuttleworth, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Richard Potter, Mr. Thomas Harbottle, and a great number of gentlemen in or near the hustings immediately left the hall, which, in the course of a few minutes, was nearly emptied. At the close of the poll it was found that out of 8,000 actual ratepayers, only 641 persons, whose votes numbered 1,610, had voted in favour of the bill. So well had Mr. Shuttleworth's advice been observed, that only six votes were recorded against the bill.

Another meeting, convened by twenty-one police commissioners, was held in the Town Hall, on the 5th of March, to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning against the proposed bill, Mr. William Harvey in the chair. The speakers were Mr. Edward Baxter, Mr. P. T. Candelet, Mr. David Holt, Mr. J. C. Dyer, Mr. J. Shuttleworth, Mr. W. Whitworth, and Mr. Richard Potter. The only speaker in favour of the proposed bill was Mr. J. E. Taylor. The meeting resolved unanimously that no new police bill should be applied for until some general agreement should be made as to its provisions, and appointed forty gentlemen

to oppose it, by deputation or otherwise, if the opposite party persisted in pressing it, in spite of the public opinion expressed against it. A general meeting of police commissioners, to the number of 500, was held on the 27th of March, and they also resolved to petition against the measure. As the proposers of the bill declined to meet and confer upon its provisions, a subscription was commenced, several of the wards subscribed more than £100 each, and all hope of amicable arrangement being dissipated, preparations were made for a hot parliamentary contest.

On Friday, the 2nd of May, the new bill was brought before a committee of the House of Commons, a strong deputation being there to support it, and Messrs. R. Potter, Joseph Brotherton, Edward Baxter, James Hampson, P. T. Candelet, and myself, as deputies from the ratepayers' meeting, to oppose it. Again an attempt was made to avoid the contest by a proposal to submit the question of qualification, the main point in dispute, to arbitration, but the promoters of the bill, as they themselves acknowledged, had received instructions from the boroughreeve's party in Manchester, to make no concession. The first day's examination was with the view of proving the preamble. On Monday, the 5th, the opposers of the bill agreed they would not rebut the evidence as to its necessity, as it was quite as desirable to repress the irregularities of the "high" party as those of the "law." On this intimation being made by Mr. Blackburn, our counsel, the examination of Mr. Oswald Milne, the law clerk to the commissioners, there fighting against his employers, which had been going on while the deputation were consulting, ceased, and the promoters of the bill proceeded in their support of the several clauses, none of which were opposed till the arrival at the one which fixed the qualification of voters at an assessed rent of £25. This was objected to, and an amendment proposed, that the qualification should be £10, the discussion of which was deferred till next day, and the

committee adjourned, having first expressed a wish that as the remaining clauses were matter of principle rather than of evidence, the two deputations should meet, and come to some agreement about them. To this the deputation opposed to the bill offered no objection, although, from the refusal of their opponents to bring the points of the qualification to reference before, on the ground that they had no authority to come to such an agreement, they saw no probability of the boroughreeve, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Green, and the rest of the promoters coming to any reasonable terms, particularly after having, as they supposed, obtained a victory in proving the preamble of the bill. However, the deputation opposing the bill sent to their opponents within two or three hours after the sitting of the committee, copies of all the clauses they intended to propose, and begged to know when Mr. Cross and his friends could meet them. Instead, however, of consenting to any conference, Mr. Cross addressed a letter to Mr. Baxter, couched in a somewhat insolent tone, rejecting at once the clauses submitted to their consideration, and expressing their opinion that such clauses could never have been submitted with any desire to come to an agreement.

On Tuesday the committee again met and proceeded to the examination of Mr. John Thorpe, comptroller of accounts to the police commissioners, who stated that 3,800 persons were assessed at £25 and upwards, and about 4,000 more at from £10 to £25. The latter, he said, consisted of small shopkeepers, such as hucksters and green-grocers, clerks, warehousemen, and mechanics. This evidence was offered to the committee to prove the assertion of Mr. Adam, one of the counsel for the bill, that, even at the high qualification of voters proposed by its promoters, there would be a numerous body of voters, and that the persons who would be excluded were of those classes which have enough to do in their own affairs, without any further interfering in police matters than to pay their rates. Mr.

Thorpe stated, also, that the persons who now attended police meetings were not of so respectable a class as those who formerly used to attend. In his cross-examination, he said, that 222 occupiers, who were then police commissioners, would not even have a vote in the elections under the new bill, being assessed at less than £25, and some at less than £15, and that even more than that number of owners, and persons who did not directly pay rates, then commissioners, would have no vote. This part of Mr. Thorpe's cross-examination not only proved the great extent of the disfranchisement that would take place, but it saved the opposers of the bill the trouble of proving that the assessments were very much lower than the real rental. Mr. Blackburn then proceeded to examine Mr. Thorpe from certain tables, which had been made up in compliance with a motion made by Mr. W. Whitworth, at the meeting on the 16th of April. By these it was shown, that of the accounts' committee, consisting of six persons, four, by the new bill, would be disqualified as voters, and five would become ineligible as commissioners; that out of ten of the scavenging committee, six would be disqualified as voters, and nine would be ineligible as commissioners, and so on through all the committees. It was next shown, by a cross-examination upon these tables, that by far the best attendance on these subsidiary committees was by individuals who, under the new act, would not only be ineligible as commissioners, but who would not even have a vote in the choice of the new managers of public affairs. It was also shown that the worst attendance was on the part of persons highly assessed; for instance, in the lamp committee, two out of the three who were highest assessed, never attended at all, while on the fire-engine committee, consisting of persons at high assessments, two never attended at all, four only once, three only twice, two only thrice, and so on.

Mr. John Wood, member for Preston, son of Mr. Ottiwell Wood, formerly of Manchester, further elicited from Mr.

Thorpe, that the management of municipal affairs was certainly "better" than it had been ten years previously, when it was notorious that, under the management of a very few commissioners, of "high respectability," so much as £50 a year, for each horse kept, was charged for bran.

MR. WOOD.—Now, Mr. Thorpe, you are obviously well acquainted with the business of the police. Do you think it possible that such a scandalous job could take place now?

MR. THORPE.—I do not think it could.

MR. WOOD.—Are not all contracts made now on the best possible terms?

MR. THORPE.—I believe they are.

MR. WOOD.—Are not the committees well attended?

MR. THORPE.—They are.

MR. WOOD.—Yet a great proportion of those who attend are assessed at a low rate?

MR. THORPE.—They are.

MR. WOOD.—Do you think the business, generally, of the committees could be better done than it is now?

MR. THORPE.—I do not think it could.

The parties for and against the bill were ordered to withdraw, and on their re-admission they were told that the committee, after considering what ought to be the qualification of voters and commissioners, had agreed to recommend that it should be on an assessment to the police rate on £20. The counsel for the promotion of the bill objected to any decision as to the qualification of commissioners before any evidence was heard on that point; but they were reminded that this was not a decision, but a recommendation. The deputation opposed to the bill promptly resolved to agree to the qualifications recommended by the committee, and an immediate communication to that effect was made to the boroughreeve. Our deputation, with the lordly letter of Mr. Cross in their hands, stating that he and the other members of *his* deputation at once rejected the clauses submitted to them, thought that after that independent course of action they

could not again evade compliance by pleading that they had no authority vested in them. About nine o'clock, however, a letter was received from Mr. Cross, saying that the deputation (Mr. Cross, Mr. Taylor, Mr. Green, and Mr. C. Smith,) had written to their "constituents," and that without instructions from them they were wholly unauthorized to agree to the qualifications recommended by the committee! This was their third refusal to come to any agreement with the opposers of the bill.

On Wednesday morning, Mr. Adams proposed an adjournment till Monday, by which time, he said, the borough-reeves's deputation would have received instructions from their constituents in Manchester. This was opposed by Mr. Blackburn, who protested against keeping the opposers of the bill in town at a heavy expense, merely because the promoters of the bill could not do anything without instructions.—Lord Stanley said that the deputation seemed to have much more limited powers than he supposed they had, and more limited than other deputations had, for gentlemen were usually sent not to demand that one course should be followed, and no other, but to do what was best under all the circumstances.—Mr. Adams replied, that the gentlemen felt it necessary to send for instructions, because, if the measures recommended by the committee were adopted, their friends in Manchester might deem it better to abandon their bill altogether.—Mr. Stanley said there was no occasion to wait for a reply from Manchester, for if the gentlemen there did not like the bill, they might abandon it in a future stage as well as now.—Mr. Adams then objected to any decision being come to as to the qualification of commissioners, as that part of the bill had not been discussed. The last-mentioned member said, that the adoption of £20 voters bore a reference to the qualification of commissioners, for the committee considered that if the one was raised, the other should be reduced. It would, he said, be lowering themselves indeed, if they were,

instead of exercising their own discretion, to wait till certain persons in Manchester made up their minds.—Sir James Graham said it would be quite derogatory to the dignity of the committee to suspend their proceedings merely because a deputation was sent which had no discretionary powers.—Mr. John Wood said it was strange that the deputation should refuse to accede to the proposal, for, in their own statement, circulated amongst the members, they had said they would cheerfully submit to any modifications the committee might think advisable.—Mr. Joseph Hulme took the same course, and at length the committee resolved that the prayer of the promoters of the bill, that they should adjourn till Monday, should not be granted.—Mr. Blackburn then spoke very shortly, but pithily, and the members were left to themselves to decide. When the parties were admitted into the room, it was found they had fixed on £20 assessment as the qualification of voters. • Then came the commissioners' qualification clause. After some discussion, the parties were again turned out—the opposers in full expectation of things being right, yet under the fear that it was possible that a muster might be made to raise it—the promoters obviously in great alarm. At length the door was opened, when Lord Stanley deliberately read over the clause, and instead of thirty-five, read twenty.

On Thursday the committee, proceeding to other clauses of the bill, made short work of a very complicated system of election devised by Mr. G. W. Wood, and apportioned the number of commissioners to each ward according to a scale, suggested by Mr. Brotherton, drawn up with a reference to both the number of the population and the amount to which property was assessed. Mr. Sergeant, solicitor, was the only one present of the original promoters of the bill, and offered no opposition to any of the amended clauses, all of which were agreed to except one, particularly insisted upon by Mr. Candelet, Mr. Hampson, and myself, which was afterwards thrown out, to fix the price of gas at

a rate which would leave a clear profit of ten per cent. per annum on the estimated value of the works. On Saturday the original promoters of the bill, who had, up to that time, shown no disposition to come to amicable terms, or to any terms, communicated to our deputation that they would allow the bill to pass without opposition, if the qualification of commissioners were raised to a £30 assessment, and the number of commissioners for each district were in proportion to the amount which such district contributed to the rates. To accede to this very modest proposal would have been to abandon half of what had already been gained, after a most vexatious and exceedingly expensive contest, and the original opposers, now the supporters, of the bill gave a prompt refusal to the proposal.

The care of the bill, during its progress through the House of Lords, was entrusted to Mr. Baxter, Mr. Brotherton, Mr. R. Potter, Mr. J. Shuttleworth, and Mr. David Holt, the belief being that a strong effort would be made there to restore the high qualification; and that such was the intention was soon proved by Lord Skelmersdale giving notice that he would move its restoration. But, after all the parade, and effort, and expenditure, and boast, and swagger, the promoters of the original bill came, cap in hand and with bated breath, to propose that if the qualification of commissioners were raised to £28, they would consent that the qualification of voters should be reduced to £16. To this the now promoters of the bill gave their consent, and it was passed. My comment at the time, in my newspaper, was: "We must not look on the bill as the best which could be framed, but as the best which could be passed; and although it is very far from being one deserving unqualified approbation, and though it may be doubtful how it will work, there can be no difference of opinion amongst the independent and thinking part of our community, that we are likely to have much more useful commissioners at a qualification of £28 than at one of £35,

and that the control exercised over those commissioners will be much more effective when their election is in the hands of persons assessed at £16 than if it had been in the hands of persons assessed at £25." In this contest the sum of £2,400 was expended by the original promoters of the bill, and £1,200 by those who contended for its amendment. The former had no legal sanction for their expenditure, but, having a majority under the new constitution, they voted repayment to themselves, accompanying the vote, however, with one that the opposers also should be repaid. The latter refused to receive the money, and insisted that both parties should bear the expenses out of their own pockets ; but the original promoters held fast by what they had received, and when all hope of their refunding the amount was lost, the original opposers who had afterwards become promoters, consented to accept of the sum voted and set apart for their use.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE AUTHOR IN DIFFICULTIES.

WHEN I purchased the copyright and materials of Mrs. Cowdroy's *Gazette* I received assistance from some friends, and amongst others from one firm that opened a credit for me with a banker. The firm which was amongst the sufferers by the great commercial depression of 1826, became insolvent; and I had to repay to the bank the money which had been advanced to me. This was the beginning of difficulties which I need not detail. Demands came upon me faster than could be met from the profits of my paper. Towards the end of 1827 my friends advised me to offer my creditors a composition, I did so, and the greater number had agreed to accept it, when one of the persons who had become security for me at the stamp-office, becoming alarmed, gave notice that he expected the board to use the power it possessed of compelling payment. What was called "an extent in aid" was issued, and I suddenly found not only all my printing materials taken possession of, but notices sent to all who owed me money that it was to be paid to government. The composition, the arrangements for which had been nearly completed, was now out of the question, and bankruptcy was the necessary result. I was in the condition of the farmer, who, having laid out all his money in improvements, was broken down just at the time when the return for his outlay began to come in. I had added fifty per cent. to the circulation of the paper, and much more than doubled its advertisements. It was yielding an income beyond my expenditure, and promised speedily to become a "good property." It was in the way of clearing off all debt upon it, but not speedily enough to

satisfy the immediate demands, and in this condition it was broken down, and I was, for the time, broken down with it. When I saw that the process of bankruptcy must take its course, but in the hope that the assignees who might be appointed for the sale of my interest therein, would not allow the paper to die out, and the value of the copyright to be lost to my creditors, I published the following address to my readers:—

“TO THE READERS OF THE ‘GAZETTE.’

“At the commencement of a new year, it has been my custom to offer to the readers of the *Gazette* my sincere and grateful acknowledgments for the support and patronage experienced by me during the time I have had the pleasure, and I trust the not unimportant or useless task of holding weekly communication with them on matters of local and general interest. I do so again on the present occasion with not less sincerity, although under circumstances which, as affecting myself, are painful and unfortunate, and to which, though of a somewhat personal nature, it seems proper for me publicly to allude.

“All the old subscribers to this paper know that, previously to its coming into my hands, it had, for some years, been conducted under most disadvantageous circumstances. Its influence upon public opinion was very limited: its advertisements, the most profitable part of a newspaper establishment, were exceedingly few; its type was fast wearing out; and although if not a very obviously sinking concern, it was a matter of some degree of wonder that it did not sink. Still it had a circulation amongst those who were pleased with its consistency during more than a quarter of a century; it had a name and a copyright, and this name and copyright, I purchased at a considerable price. Once the *Gazette* had been a very different thing, and I looked upon it as capable of being restored to and raised beyond its former condition. When I turned over its pages, and conned its contents; when I saw what it was, and knew what it had been; and when I reflected on the wide scope which the increase of the population, trade, and intelligence of the district, afforded for exertion, I felt as many an enterprising agriculturist has felt when walking over the fields of a once well cultivated and prosperous farm, which, either from the neglect or poverty of the cultivator, had become a wilderness; but from which, after a liberal outlay, there might still be

expected a liberal return. Such a man, in such a pursuit, is often too sanguine in his views, and prone to look at what the farm may bring him years hence, and after he has expended his money in improving it, than to the return it can yield in the early period of his tenantry. In counting the future gains from acres which are yet unproductive, he will confidently lay out his money in draining and trenching, and ploughing, and hedging, and planting (to say nothing of the too great price he may pay for his occupation of it), the land which is to give its harvest at a future period. And thus, while effecting undoubted improvements, the man, if his capital be not great, finds his means to be exhausted precisely when the return of his outlay is about to be fully enjoyed ; and perhaps he sees the fruits of his labours pass into the hands of others who gather where they have not strewed.

"Very much like this have been my calculations and conduct. I have effected the improvement ; I have changed totally the aspect of my concern. I have, during less than four years, raised the *Gazette* so far, that, in circulation, it ranks behind not more than five or six of all the country papers, and behind only one of the Manchester papers. It has, under my management, acquired some importance as the organ of bold and independent sentiments, with regard both to local and national topics. It does actually yield a handsome income at the present time. But having accomplished thus much I find myself, for a time, at least, overwhelmed with engagements, resulting, in a great measure, from my efforts to improve my paper, and to make it that which it was capable of being made.

"There are causes of embarrassment to which the case supposed bears no analogy. The outgoings of a newspaper establishment are comparatively large sums, while all its incomings are small. The former are certain, constant, and admit of no delay. The latter are of such a nature, that the most incessant watchfulness and effort are necessary to make them available. The accounts for newspapers, for advertisements, and for printing, are numerous beyond the conception of those who are ignorant of the details of such a business ; and these are almost all credit accounts ; and these little credit accounts are precisely those which people in general care least about punctually paying, and which it is therefore most difficult to collect. Over this department, while labouring in the editorial field, to raise the character of the paper, to increase its circulation, and extend its advertising connexion, I have been unable to exercise that close and watchful superintendence which it required, and the effect has been

much more than any person unacquainted with such a business could readily conceive. If, for having suffered these losses to accrue for want of my constant personal superintendence of the department in question, I am blameable, (which I do not deny,) I must be content to bear all the censure I may receive from those who have known what it is to feel their minds distracted by the long-continued and severe illness of those who are dearest to them, and who also know something of the pressure with which this evil has weighed upon me—a pressure which is now, I thank God, lightened in a great degree, and is, I trust, in a course of complete removal.

“I again offer to the readers of the *Gazette* my warm and sincere thanks for their patronage, and beg leave to express my hope that it will still be continued; for every thing which improves the condition of this paper, will improve the situation of my creditors, and facilitate my arrangements with them.

“*Gazette Office, January 12th, 1828.*”

This address brought around me many sympathising friends, including some of my heaviest creditors, who tried to soothe my feelings by assuring me that I had suffered because I was in advance of public opinion, and by circumstances over which I could have no control, and that better times would come. Amongst other notes of encouragement, for which I felt grateful, was one from Mr. Egerton Smith, who, in the *Liverpool Mercury* of February 1st said generously: “The proprietors of newspapers who dare fearlessly advocate the cause of parliamentary reform, and of civil and religious liberty, and expose private delinquency, are beset with so many perils, that they ought, at least, to encourage each other, and especially in the hour of adversity. For some reason, for which we are unacquainted, the editor of the *Manchester Gazette* seems to want cheering up a little just at this moment; and we trust our respectable and honest contemporary will not be offended if we take the liberty to clap him on the back. We have marked his political career, and have found him to be one of those public characters who cannot be spared in such times as these. We were much concerned to hear a rumour that the *Gazette* was

about to be relinquished, and we are much pleased to find this rumour unfounded."

The day came for my appearance before the bankruptcy commissioners. The kind-hearted Richard Potter, one of my assignees, with tears in his eyes and a voice broken by emotion, uttered something of ill health at my home, and of mistaken calculations of success, and my examination was passed with scarcely another word. I went from the meeting to the New Quay Company's warehouse, where the dead bodies were laid of a number of young persons who had been drowned that morning at the launch of a vessel in the river. I had scarcely seen death before, and the wet and livid bodies presented it in a frightful form; but I found myself, while contemplating the melancholy scene, reflecting, with some degree of envy, that after life's fitful fever they slept sound. The unnerving thought held me but for a moment. There were duties to be done, and I resolved, with the help of God, that they should be done. I was spared to help forward, however humbly, by my voice and pen, many movements to promote the happiness of my fellow-men,—to see catholic emancipation follow the repeal of the test and corporation acts, the passing of the reform bill, the abolition of slavery in our colonies, the reform of our municipal corporations, the reduction of the duty on newspapers, the adoption of the penny postage, the abolition of the monopoly of bible-printing in Scotland, a great impulse given to early tuition, the repeal of the corn and navigation laws, and a wide recognition of the principles of peace,—to prove, notwithstanding my disastrous and almost heart-breaking business failure, that Manchester could support a thoroughly independent newspaper,—and to leave in my editorial place, after nineteen years of further not uninfluential labour, men disposed to carry out the principles which I had advocated, and a public prepared to demand, if it could not be had without a demand, an unshrinking expression, through the press, of reform principles.

The *Manchester Gazette* passed out of my hands, soon afterwards to be incorporated with the *Manchester Times*, which was established by a joint-stock company, consisting of a number of gentlemen, several of whom had lost money by my bankruptcy, but desirous to secure my public services. In a spirit of delicate generosity to one who might, uncharitably, be considered as a fallen man, I was requested to draw out the prospectus in my own name, and to give my own assurance to the public that I had full liberty to carry out all the principles I had formerly advocated, independent of any clique or party. In the first published number of the new paper, which appeared on the 17th of October, 1828, amongst other pledges of unabated and unflinching devotion to the cause of reform, I gave the following :—

“I shall often ask my townsmen whether it is to be believed that an assembly chosen by the people ever should have enacted measures to prohibit, until actual famine should have begun to rage, the introduction of cheap corn from all the countries around us, when all those countries required from us, in exchange nothing but those manufactured goods, to the production of which the population has, by tens, and hundreds, and thousands, been turning the labour which formerly went to the cultivation of the earth; I shall often ask my townsmen, who are especially affected by the odious policy, whether the *people's representatives*, seeing surplus corn abroad and surplus goods at home, and the proprietors of each needing that which the other wished to dispose of, would have decreed that the mutually beneficial exchange should not take place, and for no reason in the world but this, that a domineering aristocracy should, out of the hard earnings of industry, which are paid for the dear bread of home production, continue to derive the exorbitant rents which war and paper money formerly enabled them to exact.”

I believe that the public have given me credit for the faithful fulfilment of this pledge. There were other newspapers which advocated parliamentary reform and the abolition of monopolies, but it was occasionally and incidentally, not with the reiterated, earnest continuousness of the *Manchester Times*, which waited not for the favourable tide

of public opinion, but strove to create it; and I may be permitted to say, without any great amount of undue assumption, that the constant exposure, in its columns, of every landlord-fallacy uttered from 1828 to 1838, contributed in no slight degree to the lead which Manchester, from the latter period, took in the great movement which resulted in the repeal of the corn law. Certain it is that, during that memorable contest, I was often cheered by the assurance of young, able, and energetic men, throwing their life and soul into the agitation for free trade, and its great anticipated result—the binding of all nations of the earth in the bonds of peace—that their first lessons in a generous political economy were derived from me. I have passed through the sandy desert where no water was, and may be allowed now to look back, with feelings, approaching to exultation, to the few green fields that lie between.

The period at which I renewed my labours as a journalist was one of high hope. There was not much movement, but men's minds were in the way of preparation for movement. Some experiments had been made in the direction of free-trade, and made without ruining commerce; the test and corporation acts had been repealed, and yet the always-in-danger church stood unshaken; the belief was gaining ground that Catholic Emancipation might be granted, not only without utterly destroying, but without in any degree endangering an enlightened Protestantism, and that a considerable reform of the representative system might take place without the extinction of our "glorious constitution." The friends of civil and religious liberty looked forward with hope, the obstructives of progress with dismay.

The bigotry and conservatism which had distinguished Manchester and its neighbourhood, were not to be vanquished without a struggle. On the 21st of November, 1828, there appeared in the Manchester papers a requisition,

signed by five hundred and fifty persons, including forty-four clergymen, calling a meeting of all who concurred with the requisitionists in the opinion that the concession of further political power to the Roman Catholics would be pregnant with danger to the constitution of these realms. A counter declaration appeared in the same papers, in which the subscribers, four hundred and fifty in number, expressed their regret that the harmony and good feeling prevalent should be disturbed by the agitation of the subject, and made known their desire to have the question left to the calm consideration of parliament. Amongst those who signed the declaration were a number of churchmen and tories, who had never before lent their names to anything so nearly approaching a liberal movement. Mr. Peel had been in Manchester in the early part of the year, and had cautiously avoided any pledge to stand firm in his opposition to concession; Eldon had been left out of office, and some rather strong suspicions had arisen that the Duke of Wellington would yield to expediency on the question. The anti-catholic meeting took place in the Manor Court Room on the following Monday, and Mr. Lavender, who had succeeded Nadin as deputy-constable, stood at the door to exclude all who were unfavourable to the object of the meeting. I see I have noted at the time that "to the honour of those who were thus questioned be it said, that as their leaders will not forswear themselves to get admittance into parliament, they would not tell a falsehood to gain admittance into the court-room of the lord of the manor of Manchester." The chairman, Mr. Hardman, very wisely said that their object was not discussion, but an expression of their fears of danger to the constitution. Mr. Norris, the paid chairman of the quarter sessions, a man of narrow intellect and confined views, moved the first resolution. His main argument was, that if catholic emancipation were granted, parliamentary reform would be demanded; "and then," he asked triumphantly, "what

would become of our constitution? What would become of king, lords, and commons? The motion was seconded by Mr. John Bradshaw, and of course carried unanimously. The other speakers or movers were Messrs. Joseph Birley, Francis Phillips, who made a stand for Protestant ascendancy, Mr. James Brierley, Mr. Benjamin Braidley, then rising into a very brief distinction, Mr. Jeremiah Fielding, Mr. Charles Cross, Mr. Watkinson, who did not wish the king to go to his grave a "perjured character," Mr. Joseph Green, whose day of local power was now nearly over, and the Rev. Cecil Daniel Wray, who still holds a very lucrative office in the church, notwithstanding catholic emancipation. The petition to the lords was to be entrusted to the Duke of Wellington, that to the commons to Mr. Peel. Alas for the expectations of our protestant ascendancy gentlemen! In three short months both of these statesmen were to be against them.

The Cheshire Brunswickers followed the example of the Manchester obstructives. A county meeting was held at Knutsford on Monday, December 28th. It had been confidently announced that it would be attended by between twenty and thirty thousand persons: notwithstanding extraordinary exertions all over the country, not more than six or seven hundred came, including the women and children of Knutsford. Peel's ominous silence, and the Duke of Wellington's expressed desire for dispassionate consideration, had prepared the minds of the more moderate for some feasible change, and they held aloof. Sir H. M. Mainwaring, a renowned fox-hunter, was called to the chair, and made a mild speech. He was followed by the Rev. Sir. Philip Grey Egerton, who was equally cautious. Mr. H. C. Cotton was also very moderate. Mr. Trafford Trafford, of Oughterington, chairman of the quarter sessions, abused O'Connell, Shiel, and the catholic priests; but being a man not averse to patronage, if exerted in his own behalf or that of his family, forebore to say much against the govern-

ment, which might possibly turn and ask its friends to turn with it. The Rev. C. W. Ethelston reminded his hearers of the massacre of St. Bartholomew's day. Mr. W. H. Polliott, speaking near dinner time, was listened to impatiently. "Well," said he, "I will not detain you. A good dinner is better than a bad speech at any time. Allow me, however, to read you what was done in the reign of Mary, which lasted four years, five months, and eleven days. In that time two hundred and seventy persons were burned to death, including five bishops. Think of that—think of that; and twenty-one clergymen—think of that. There were also eight laymen and eighty-four tradesmen; and now listen, you husbandmen,—one hundred husbandmen were burned—aye, made beef-steaks of. Think of that, farmers of Cheshire. How would you like to made beef-steaks of? Think of that." The farmers of Cheshire proved that they did think of it by voting for the resolutions. The leaders afterwards dined together, and drank "protestant ascendancy," all standing—who could stand—and thus the great county demonstration ended, the last that was attempted by the hitherto ruling party in ultra loyal and protestant Cheshire.

At a meeting of the Catholic Association, held in the month of December, Mr. O'Connell said he had ascertained that an emancipation bill was actually in the hands of the lawyers, and that ministers were making preparations to have it passed through both houses of parliament, at the approaching session. I had a lurking suspicion that the catholic leaders would be glad to barter, for the removal of their own civil disabilities, the political rights of their humbler countrymen, and I thus hinted it in my paper of the 28th:—

"The bill, described by Mr. O'Connell, is infinitely less objectionable in its principle than that which had his cordial approbation in 1825, for its defect is only a foolish restriction of catholic votes to subjects not connected with the church, while the bill which he and

his colleagues sanctioned, would have limited the elective franchise, already by far too narrow, and thus made a *barter of popular rights for aristocratic principles*. Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Shiel can have no objection to sit in the House of Commons, even with a limitation of their votes to subjects unconnected with the endowed church; for no sacrifice of principle is made when men enter upon the enjoyment of enlarged privileges, though the enlargement be not so ample as they desired and contended for; but had Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Shiel obtained an extension of their own privileges, by consenting, in the name of their countrymen, to a limitation of the elective suffrage, *it would have been one of the basest instances of selfish bartering that ever disgraced the annals of a country notorious for injuries inflicted on the many for the benefit of the few*. We were amongst the few journalists who opposed the flagitious design to disfranchise the Irish freeholders, and to place the Irish Roman Catholic priesthood as pensioners upon the produce of the taxes paid by English Protestants; and having denounced the scheme as *flagrantly disgraceful to the catholic leaders, and to the professed friends of reform*, who professed it, we rejoiced that the bill of 1825, with such adjuncts, was thrown out of parliament; and we now rejoice at the prospect of a measure, which, emanating in 1829 from an almost Eldon administration, shall more respect the rights of the people than that which in 1825 was sanctioned and supported by the whilom leaders of the English reformers. We shall have proof, indeed, that the school-master is abroad, if the Duke of Wellington dare not attempt an abridgment of popular suffrage, which Burdett and Brougham proposed, and had they had the power, would have carried into effect!"

The base bargain was made, after all! The boon and the blow were accepted together—the boon to the leaders, the heavy blow to their generous and faithful followers. Miss Martineau, in her valuable "History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace," says:—"On looking back to this time, nothing is more surprising than the quietness with which the disfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders took place. There were some few who saw and exposed the badness of the proceeding, but they were very few; and the very men who ought to have understood and been faithful to the principle of the case,—the very men who, in the same session spoke and voted for parliamentary

reform, helped to extinguish the political liberties of the forties! Mr. Brougham regarded it as the almost extravagant price of the inestimable good which would arise from catholic emancipation. Sir J. Macintosh, declared it a tough morsel which he had found it hard to swallow. Lord Duncannon, Lord Palmerston, and Mr. Huskisson tried another method. They did what argument could do to obtain the inestimable good without paying the extravagant price which they did not conceive to be necessary. If they had been duly supported by all the friends of parliamentary reform, there is little doubt that the relief of the catholics might have been obtained without the sacrifice of so vast an amount of political right. But among the silent and idle was O'Connell, who threw overboard his believed, 'Forties,' after pledging his life to destruction, and his soul to perdition, if he ever again slighted their liberties; and in a case where O'Connell so failed, we have little power of censure to share for meaner offenders." My censure, the censure of one of the few, "the very few," who protested against the base bargain, extends to all the offenders, great and small. It was not Mr. Brougham who had to pay the extravagant price; it was not Sir James Macintosh who had the tough morsel to swallow; it was not Mr. O'Connell who made a sacrifice. The act was a wholesale disfranchisement of the poor to obtain privilege for a few of the rich. It reduced the electoral body in Ireland to such a small handful, that Lord John Russell's administration, in very shame, because the whole country was crying shame on it, was obliged to come forward, in this year 1850, with a tinkering measure to remedy the evil inflicted twenty-one years before. It was sickening to contrast the pertinacity with which the House of Commons defended the privilege of a handful of corrupt voters in a Cornish borough with its hot-haste in disfranchising 200,000 voters in Ireland.

While indulging in the hope of reform I saw that, to make an improvement of the representative system pro-

ductive of really good government, instruction must be widely diffused amongst the people, and that instruction, to be effective, must be commenced yearly. Schools for Infants had been established, but the system had made little progress. Samuel Wilderspin had done some good by attracting attention to the advantages to be derived from very early tuition. Bishops and lords had tried to do so, but with little success. Wilderspin illustrated his plan. He carried a school with him, and exhibited it before the admiring eyes of the benevolent; and tears from the well-spring of the heart, and smiles irradiating lovely countenances betokened the triumph of the simple and the beautiful exhibition. Societies were formed, and schools were built, and hopes were indulged that the infant race was speedily to be religiously and morally instructed, before vicious habits could fasten themselves with an iron grasp upon the infant mind. But to build new schools was an expensive process; the initiative was costly, and the subsequent required support was costly. The recipients of the benefit, parents among the poorer classes, were not much disposed to pay for a good which they did not very well understand. The Lady Bountiful was very kind; the rich folks were very kind; it was a nice thing for their little ones to sing nice little songs and to behave pretty; but "really twopence every week was a good deal for a poor man to pay." And some doubted the good to be derived. They had not felt the want, and had not sought the benefit. It was a new thing proceeding from the rich without consultation with the poor, and might be, after all, only another scheme similar to the charity school, where the principal thing was how poor men's boys should pull off their caps, and poor men's girls should make their curtsy to the squire and the parson, and the squire's lady and the parson's lady. Sad perversion of thought, certainly; but those who entertained it had not enjoyed the benefit of early tuition, and the doubt was excusable.

It struck me that something more practicable might be attempted, and I suggested it. All the Sunday schools stood invitingly open six days in the week; why not bring *them* into daily use? A sum of £400 or £500 would be required to build a school for infants. There were hundreds of places ready built, used only on the Sunday, ready for additional use at a trifling expense. The mere suggestion gave a greater impulse to that system of teaching than it had previously received. Another suggestion greatly lessened the pecuniary responsibility for current expenses. To render the schools, as nearly as possible, self-supporting, it was necessary to have a fair number of scholars attending and paying constantly. That could not be had without convincing parents that it was their interest and their duty to send their children, not occasionally, but regularly. I sought out school rooms where I could deliver lectures on the subject. Parents were called together by bell or handbill. They were told that the main support of the schools, almost the only support of the schools, must come from them. They were told that reading and writing were only parts of education—not knowledge, but only the means of obtaining knowledge; and that the training of the affections and the conversion from bad habits, even where reading and writing not attained, was ~~not~~ and a most important part of education, well worth paying for. Where such explanations were given, the schools were prosperous and nearly self-supporting. Where they were not given, the main obstacle to success remained, and the schools languished, a heavy burden on the hands of the benevolent persons who established them.

Seeing that these gratuitous lectures, delivered in many towns in the manufacturing districts during the years 1828 and 1829, had caused the establishment of a number of successful schools, I published a sixpenny tract on the subject in 1830, which was widely circulated. In the preface to a third edition of it, published in March, 1832, I said;—

“At the period when I send this edition to the press, there is an additional incentive to every labourer in the vineyard of instruction. The probability of a great extension of the elective suffrage makes it the duty of all who have the welfare of their country at heart, to promote the means of enabling those to whom the right is to be extended, to exercise it for the public good. I know of nothing more likely to effect so desirable an end than the establishment of schools which not only instruct the child, but make it a most influential teacher of the parent, by awakening a perception of social relations, and the obligation of social duties.” A fourth and stereotyped edition was published in March, 1847. As the subject of national education has recently excited much discussion, as great encouragement has been given to voluntary effort, by the exhibition of what it has already done, and as there is a wide-spread conviction that religious and moral instruction cannot, without great difficulty, be conveyed to considerable portions of the community unless it be commenced before the labour of children, however small its reward may be, becomes important to their parents, I may be permitted here to express a hope, that a noble superstructure may rise upon the foundations which have been laid.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE DARK HOUR BEFORE THE DAWN.

THE recollection of a period of general distress, some twenty years back, is like the remembrance of a long-continued illness at the same distance of time. In both instances there is an impression of misery endured, but it is softened by the lapse of years, its most painful circumstances forgotten, and the remembrance is scarcely more than that of a vague but painful dream. But in the case of illness, suppose the sufferer has written down an account of the continuance of his disease, day after day, week after week, and month after month; through the dreariness of winter, made more dreary by despondency; through the hopeful spring, without hope; through the joyous summer without joy; through the cheerful autumn, without other thought than of falling leaves and decay, to another dreary winter, without the slightest prospect of a favourable change,—suppose such a journal written, and read after a lapse of twenty years, every circumstance is recalled with a vivid strength which is almost overpowering. Such feelings have I experienced in looking over the file of my paper for 1829, for there is recorded the “state of trade,” week after week, throughout the year, and every week there is a record of deep and still deepening distress.

In January, it is noted that at Stockport, in consequence of the refusal of the operatives to submit to a reduction of wages to the amount of ten per cent., no fewer than fifteen establishments had been stopped, and two thousand persons thrown out of employment; in the beginning of February that ten thousand were out of employment in that town, while the failure of country drapers was checking the spring

trade in Manchester; in March, that the spinners had given notice of working short time, so as to make only five days in the week; in April, that there was no amendment; in May, that the Stockport hands were still out, and that wages elsewhere were undergoing further reductions; in June, that some employment was "hoped" for; in July, that there were some indications of improvement, but without any effect on prices or wages; in the same month, that, notwithstanding the long turn-out in Stockport, stocks were not diminishing, and wages continued to fall; in August, that the distress was deepening all around, profits and wages daily becoming less; in September, that the shopkeepers, depending on the expenditure of the working classes, were in deep distress; in October, that the downward progress of wages and profit still continued, and that the condition of the weaver was truly deplorable; in November, that the peace between Russia and Turkey had brought a few buyers into the market for low-priced printed goods, but that for every other description of goods, there was little demand; and in December, that everywhere in the manufacturing districts the greatest distress prevailed, and that wages were still falling. And that the year, commencing disastrously for both masters and men, ended, without an interval of relaxation from distress, scarcely with an interval of hope, in a depression of trade almost unexampled, bankruptcy and ruin threatening the employers and utter starvation the employed.

During all this downward progress, the press, with very few exceptions, laboured earnestly to persuade the public that the distress was only temporary. Trade was always to be better next week or next month. In winter, it was to be better in the spring; in spring, it was to be better in the summer; in summer, it was to be better in the autumn. The writers seemed to think, that all that was wanted was "confidence," and that prosperity could be restored by confident and reiterated assertions that things were about

to mend. The *Manchester Guardian* was in the front rank of the hopeful, or professedly hopeful; and though it had to confess, week after week, the delay of the prognosticated improvement, there was always some reason given for the delay, and new prophecies made that the good time was coming—any reason but the true one. The truth was, that the press generally was committed as to the effect to be produced by the withdrawal from circulation, in April, of Bank of England and other notes under the value of five pounds. Almost every journalist of the period held that the bank had, at the end of 1828, made provision for that change, and that the consequent increase in the value of money, and decrease in the value of other commodities, had already taken place. In support of this opinion, every successive proof of depression was declared to be only temporary. I followed Cobbett's opinion to a certain extent, believing that money would continue to increase, and other commodities to decrease in value, throughout the whole of 1829; and I earnestly and reiteratedly pressed my views on the community, convinced that there was more safety in looking the danger straight in the face than in indulging groundless hope of a favourable change.

The mischief done by representations that the distress was only temporary, was soon manifest. The working classes could not understand why, under only a temporary depression of trade, a constant reduction of their wages should go on. If trade was to be "better next week," why were weavers to be discharged? If yarns were to be more in demand "next week," why were the prices of spinning to be reduced? If manufacturers were all to be prosperous, by and by, why were working men to be reduced to the condition of paupers in the meantime? There was a great "turn-out," and employers took little pains to explain—perhaps, like the employed, they did not understand—their actual position; and the two classes were arrayed against each other in a hostility which daily became more bitter,

each taking that antagonistic position to the other that they should have taken against what occasioned the distress of both—ruinous restrictions on trade, and a heavy aggravation of the burthen of taxation, by the altered value of money, without a corresponding reduction of the public expenditure.

On Monday, April 27th, the distressed silk weavers of Macclesfield, who had previously borne their privations with exemplary patience, assembled in the Market Place, to the number of a thousand, and proceeded to Messrs. Broeklehurst's factory at Hurdsfield, where they demolished all the windows in front of the building, and dispersed before the recruiting parties in the town could be put under arms. On Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday they paraded the streets with flags inscribed "We only wish to live by our labour." On Wednesday a number of men at Rochdale, who had turned out, met, and went to the weavers who were employed, demanding their shuttles. On Thursday the factory of Messrs. Chadwick and Co. was surrounded by a great crowd, some of whom entered and destroyed a great deal of machinery, and at Mr. Robinson's and Mr. Ashworth's factory the same mischief was perpetrated. The military were called out, but arrived too late to prevent the mischief. On Friday sixteen men were committed for trial at Lancaster for taking part in these riots. An event more melancholy was to follow. When the prisoners were lodged in the lock-ups, the dragoons retired, leaving the place guarded by eleven soldiers, including a sergeant and corporal, of the 67th. Soon after the horse soldiers were out of sight, the mob began to rally, and about eight o'clock some stones were thrown at the soldiers on guard, and in a short time they fell in such showers, that the soldiers began to entertain fears of their own safety, and the sergeant told the crowd that if they did not desist, he should be compelled to order his men to fire. As this threat produced no effect, he ordered two

men to fire, which they did, taking care, however, to fire high. The moment, however, that it was seen that neither of the shots had taken effect, the crowd, which had retreated, began to rally, and again to close round the soldiers and assail them with stones. The men seem now to have been in great danger, and the sergeant, acting, as he says, under the belief that the prisoners might be rescued, ordered the soldiers to fire. The command was immediately obeyed; but it would seem as if the crowd kept pressing upon them, shouting for the rescue of the prisoners, and throwing stones with the utmost fury. The soldiers having loaded again, fired, and their volley must have been dreadfully destructive, for almost every shot took effect, and six or eight persons fell. The mob, seeing this, instantly took to flight, and the dragoons, arriving soon after, cleared the streets.

Riots in Manchester were less fatal, but more destructive of property. On Sunday, May 3rd, a meeting of hand-loom weavers, the most deeply distressed portion of the community, was held at Harpurhey, at which it was resolved that the power-loom weavers should be invited to leave the factories next day, rather than submit to an intended reduction of their wages. On Monday a number of persons congregated in St. George's Fields, proceeded thence to Mr. Guest's factory in Union-street, and made his weavers leave their looms. Hitherto their intentions seem to have been to get the men to leave their work; but when they got to another factory in Mather-street, belonging to Mr. Twiss, they were not satisfied with requiring the men to leave their work, but broke into the mill and cut to pieces all the warps in the looms, and broke the reeds and every thing that was easily destructible about the looms. They then set about tossing the webs into the street, and the street, for fifty yards on each side of the factory, was literally covered with cloth trampled into the mud. The mob then proceeded to Mr. Harbottle's factory, in Pollard-street, and

having effected a forcible entry, they at once set to the work of destruction, as if in their unchecked progress they had entirely lost sight of their first intention, for no invitation was given to the weavers to turn out. Here the mischief was much greater than at Mr. Twiss's. The windows were instantly smashed in, and the destruction of machinery was systematic and effective. Forty-six power-looms were instantly rendered useless, a single blow with a sledge-hammer being sufficient to break the cast-iron framing, and another to destroy the regulating pinion-wheels. In a spinning-room below less evil was done, for the spindles are not easily broken; but in a long shed, one story in height, containing ninety-two dandy-looms, the destruction was complete. One man on each side, with a single cut of a knife, cut through the warp, and with another the healds, while another man on each side followed, and with one blow broke the frames, and with another the wheels. After having demolished the whole of the windows in front, they went leisurely off. All this was done in less than an hour from the time they left St. George's Fields. They then came back in the direction of Mr. Guest's, from which they had previously induced the weavers to withdraw. They seemed now flushed with success, for, immediately on coming to the factory, they set to work, knocked out the windows, and in a quarter of an hour fifty-three power-looms were broken, and a vast quantity of warps tossed out of the windows and thrown into the canal, which was covered with them, as the road had been at Twiss's with webs. By this time the beadles, with Mr. Lavender, the deputy constable, at their head, had arrived; but this force was soon disposed of. The police, finding themselves unable to make head, retired prudently, and, though pursued by the mob, they contrived to lay hold of two men, who were pointed out to them as having been seen throwing stones at the factory windows. They finally took refuge from the showers of stones which were thrown

at them in the Albion Hotel, where some of the magistrates were by this time assembled. The mob were, in the mean time, taking advantage of their victory; and while a part pursued the constables, another part proceeded to the factory of Messrs. J. and J. Parker, in Ludgate-street, St. George's-road, who had taken 3d. per cut from their wages. The mob made several attempts to burst in the door, but this, for a long time, withstood their efforts, and, in the mean time, others were demolishing the windows by throwing stones at them. The door was at length burst in, and the looms and webs were disposed of in the same manner as the others. This method being, however, a somewhat slow process, and several alarms having been given that the military were coming, the factory was set fire to in several places. The building was about forty yards long, about twenty wide, and seven stories high. There was a brisk breeze, and as all the windows on the undermost floor were completely knocked in, the fire spread most rapidly, and in little more than half an hour it was all one tremendous flame. The blaze from the one window joined the blaze from the window above it, so that the whole was one immense mass of vivid flame. The houses in the streets on three sides of the factory were set fire to by the heat. Some of these were at the distance of thirty yards from the factory, and it was only with the utmost exertions on the part of the persons who resided in them that they were saved from the flames. Almost all the furniture was removed out of them, there being at one time scarcely any hope of saving the houses, the fire having caught hold in so many places at once. On the entrance of the mob into the lower story, Messrs. Parker and their assistants retreated to the staircase leading to the second story, where they remained for the purpose of opposing any attempt to penetrate to the upper room. They had not been there long, however, when the progress of the flames, which began to ascend on all sides of them, rendered it necessary to

depart, and they accordingly escaped through the fire, with considerable difficulty, and retreated to the house of their overlooker, which adjoins the factory gates. The difficulty of escape was much increased by the flames issuing through the two doors opposite each other at the foot of the staircase, and by the incendiaries throwing staves and other missiles into the door of the room on the second story, where Messrs. Parker and their assistants were, with the view, as it would appear, of preventing their escape. Mr. Parker escaped with the loss of his coat and hat, which he had placed in the counting-house. While this was going on the magistrates and the peace officers were waiting at the Albion Hotel for the arrival of such a military force as was to be had. A part of the military force which was in Manchester had been sent to Rochdale, and a part to Macclesfield, to quell the riots in those towns, and the remainder on Monday morning set out for Liverpool, on their way to Ireland. Having gathered together twelve soldiers of a recruiting party, some armed with bayonets and one with a pistol, Mr. Lavender put himself at their head, and led them to Messrs. Parkers' factory, where they arrived just after the rioters had dispersed, and the fire had gone so far ahead as to render any attempt to save the factory out of the question. Shortly after, Mr. Foster and Mr. Greaves, two of the magistracy, arrived at the same spot, at the head of about twenty dragoons. All, however, that they could do was to ride through and preserve order in the neighbourhood, which was now exceedingly crowded by persons flocking from all quarters to learn the cause of the disturbances. Though there was no further manifestation of any intention to riot, they continued to parade the streets during the greater part of the afternoon and evening. The terror, of course, spread over the town, and a great many of the shops, especially in that quarter where the factories were situated, were closed. Several of the masters of other factories procured fire-arms, and now and then fired a shot

to show that they were prepared to defend their property in case of an attack. On the Tuesday and Wednesday great alarm continued to prevail throughout the town, for although an accession of military strength prevented further attacks, mobs suddenly congregated in particular places, and sacked the provision shops, and levied contributions in money and food from private houses, dispersing before any force could be brought to bear against them. By Wednesday night order was restored.

At a time when masters were regarded by the working people as grievous oppressors, and when the working people were regarded by their masters as unreasoning and brutal incendiaries, the duty of a journalist was not easily fulfilled. I endeavoured to call the attention of both to the real causes of the distress which was prostrating both. In a long address, in my paper of the 9th of May, I showed how the corn law had limited the demand for goods and reduced the wages of labour; I dwelt on the effect of increasing the value of money, and consequently reducing the price of everything except corn, while taxation, in the fifteenth year of peace, was as heavy, the different value of money considered, as it was during the war; I represented the injurious effect on wages occasioned by the great immigration from Ireland of poor creatures who were ejected by the landlords from their native soil in tens of thousands; I counselled petitions for a repeal of the corn law, for a great reduction of taxation, for the extension of a poor law to Ireland, and, as a guard against the recurrence of misery, for a thorough reform in parliament. Newspapers were then sevenpence, which placed them beyond the reach of the mass of the people. My appeal was printed as a penny pamphlet, and the sale of thousand after thousand, for weeks together, showed that, amidst the bitter and foolish war of classes, there were many anxious inquirers into the real causes and cure of the distress.

By this time Colonel Thompson's admirable *Catechism of*

the Corn Laws had appeared in a cheap form, was much read, and conveyed much useful and exceedingly well-timed instruction. I wished to circulate its wholesome truths and fallacy-destroying arguments still more widely, and the proprietors of the *Manchester Times*, always ready to promote the public good, cheerfully acceded to my request, that four thousand copies of it should be printed and given away with the paper. This was done in August, greatly to the promotion of that thorough knowledge of the corn question, which, nine years after, made Manchester originate and lead the great free-trade movement. Nor was this diffusion of knowledge, on this one point, without more immediate effects. The reform bill itself was hastened on mainly by the conviction, that without a great organic change in our representative system the landlords' monopoly could not be destroyed. There was good seed sown in those unpromising times. The humble country journalist, when accused of asking for the impracticable, could point to Bentham, and Thompson, and Bowring, who, in the *Westminster Review*, were convincing the educated classes that radical reform in representation and commercial policy, was, after all, not the very frightful wild-fowl it had been taken for; and with the example of such a triumvirate, he went on determinedly on his way, hopefully, in spite of every discouragement to hope. After this dreary 1829, the first number of my paper for 1830 contained the whole of a forthcoming article by Colonel Thompson in the *Westminster*, on Radical Reform, which thus concluded:—“Eschew violence; cultivate education from A, B, C, upwards; hurry nothing,—*it will all come in time, like the breaking up of a hard frost.* Pull down an abuse when you can, especially where it is one, like that of slavery in the West Indies, whose supporters support all the rest. Go on, quietly and perseveringly, and fear nothing. There will be no revolution, no disturbance, no violent changes,—any more than a child, of a span long, turns into a grena-

dier. Sensible men are not to endure an evil for ever, through a vague fear of its removal being something they have not heard before, Do something; do a little; do more when you can. Keep the stone rolling; and see if you do not end by proving to all ranks and orders, except the downright plunderers, that radical is your only wear."

In the first week of 1830 William Cobbett delivered four lectures in Manchester to crowded audiences. Ten years before, on his return from the United States, the authorities notified to him that he should not be permitted to pass through the town. Many of his hearers were persons, who, at the former period, approved of that extraordinary exercise of power. His leading propositions were, that lessening the quantity of the currency had increased its value; that the increase in the value of money had increased the claims of all creditors, especially the public creditor; and that the fall in the price of every commodity, without a correspondent reduction of taxes, had occasioned intolerable distress. His wonderful power of illustration, on these few propositions, engaged the deep attention of crowded audiences every night, and the thunders of applause, with which he was greeted at the close of the course, must have made some amends to him for his scurvy non-reception in December, 1819. Two omissions, however, were remarked upon by even his ardent admirers, the monopoly of the corn growers, and the want of an adequate representation in the House of Commons. His then rival Hunt, a man of far inferior abilities, even as a speaker, had much sounder notions on the corn laws; and Cobbett seemed less anxious to have parliamentary reform than that he himself should be a member of parliament. He said that ere long he would sit on the same bench with Mr. Huskisson, but it was long after Huskisson's death before he obtained a seat in the legislature. Another lecturer had visited Manchester in the previous year, Mr. J. S. Buckingham, whose really able exposition of the East

India monopoly excited a considerable share of public attention, and led to a public meeting on the 21st of January, at which spirited resolutions were passed in favour of free trade with India and China. The principal speakers were, Messrs. G. W. Wood, John Shuttleworth, Robert Hyde Greg, and Mark Philips; and they had the aid of some gentlemen who, though they saw nothing alarming in the prospect of free trade with India, would have been frightened at the notion of having free trade at home—no harm in selling their calicoes to John Chinaman, but great mischief in receiving brother Jonathan's corn. They were, however, taking one step in the right direction.

A demand for some reforms at home speedily followed. On the 20th of February appeared a requisition for a meeting, to be held in the Town Hall, to take into consideration the propriety of addressing parliament on the distressed state of the country, and of petitioning, that an immediate reduction of the taxes be made, and that commerce be not disturbed by again altering the value of the currency. I am tempted to give the names of all the requisitionists:—

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| William Horsley, | Robert Lees, | John Ashworth, |
| Alexander Horsley, | Thomas Deane, | James Cunningham, |
| S. Y. Bailey, | H. J. Barker, | John Hunt, |
| James Wilde, | H. Prescott, | William Yates, |
| John Hulme, | John Samuels, | J. S. Ormerod, |
| James Bayley, | Gerard Cowell, | Samuel Pullein, |
| William B. Bayley, | John Wallis, | Robert Wyatt, |
| John Read, | Joseph Thompson, | William Labrey, |
| J. Smith, | Edward Shawcross, | W. B. Grime, |
| Robert Sykes, | Ben. Sandford, | Thomas Goadsby, |
| Ben. Holbrooke, | James G. Frost, | F. Goadsby, jun., |
| John Jackson, | Edward Daniel, | Richd. Hutchinson, |
| James Hardman, | Thomas Johnson, | James Crankshaw, |
| Robert Bunting, | Jos. Dickinson, | W. D. Coddington, |
| James Ashworth, | P. W. Danby, | R. H. Greg, |
| Thomas Davies, | John Todd, | John Ashton, |
| Thomas Moore, | Samuel Prince, | Richard Potter. |

| | | |
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| James H. Heron, | William Newall, | William Harvey, |
| Isaac Hudson, | John Whyatt, | John Dugdale, |
| Thomas Green, | William Maybury, | John Brooks, |
| Nehemiah Gerrard, | Francis Clarke, | Josias Foster, |
| John Shepherd, | Richard Wilson, | Nath. Tidmarsh, |
| John Deerhurst, | William Barratt, | Robert Whyatt, |
| Thomas Broadbent, | Joseph Barratt, | Samuel Mitchell, |
| Jos. S. Grafton, | J. and W. Ansell, | Thos. Worthington, |
| Thomas Potter, | H. Richardson, | George Gill, |
| Thomas Fielden, | James Twisse, | T. Smith, |
| John Hoyle, | William Hunt, | John Warner, |
| George Culverwell, | James Knight, | Nicholas Wright, |
| William Bayley, | T. H. Bickham, | Thomas Labrey, |
| David Hunt, | Robert Henson, | John Whitlow, |
| Richard Sutcliffe, | Robert Leake, | Edward Royle, |
| Robert Clough, | William Marsh, | Jos. Fletcher, |
| Daniel Jackson, | Thomas Diggles, | John Roberts, |
| Richard Boardman, | William Foster, | John Royle, |
| Thomas Noblet, | Thomas Smith, | John Faulkner, |
| Isaac Pipe, | George Thorniley, | Robert Pritchard, |
| James Townsend, | John Richardson, | Michael Peacock, |
| George Rowland, | Henry Moore, | John Tomlinson, |
| J. Everett, | Archibald Prentice, | William Wood, |
| John Armstrong, | Caleb Lea, | John Richardson, |
| James Holden, | William Nixon, | James Oldfield, |
| P. T. Candelet, | Pascoe Aranson, | John Kenworthy, |
| George Bentham, | Edwin Stott, | W. G. Ansell, |
| Roger Reyner, | Samuel Lowe, | Samuel Johnson, |
| Thomas Crossley, | Thomas Forrest, | James Crossfield, |
| Thomas Brown, | William Fox, | William Howard, |
| William Davies, | William Lane, | William Fowler, |
| Thomas Gelland, | Stephen Sheldon, | Richard Thelwell. |
| G. H. Winder, | James Massey, jun., | |

The boroughreeve, Mr. Bulkeley Price, and the constables, Mr. Edmund Buckley (afterwards member for Newcastle-under-Lyne) and Mr. R. C. Sharp, appointed the meeting to be held in the Town Hall, on the following Thursday, the first time that any meeting, for any such purpose, had been held there. The first resolution was:—
 “That the great manufacturing district, of which this town

is the centre and the mart, notwithstanding the unwearied and the incessant labour of its inhabitants, is suffering under a pressure of distress which, except in short periods of depression, is wholly unexampled in its extent and severity." It was moved by Mr. Richard Potter, who, in describing the wretchedness of the poor man's cottage, became so overpowered by his feelings as to be unable to proceed. Mr. John Shuttleworth, in a very effective speech, gave a statement of the enormous expenditure from the commencement of the war to that period, the fifteenth year of peace; alluded to the bankers' and the landlords' monopolies at home, and the tea, sugar, and timber monopolies abroad; and concluded by saying:—"The calamities under which this country is suffering arise from inordinate and unequal taxation; from the restrictions on the trade in corn, which a sordid aristocracy, for its own advantage, has had the power, owing to the unfortunate constitution of our legislature, to inflict upon our nation; and from those monopolies which, to the disgrace of our commercial system, are perpetuated to gratify the selfishness of the powerful few, and at the expense and to the injury of the powerless many. These are the causes of the present general and unprecedented distress, and the means of alleviation, therefore, are clearly to remove those causes, to repeal the restrictions on the trade in corn, to abolish all monopolies, and to reduce taxation." This speech was received with loud and reiterated cheers, but the meeting would not pass the resolution excepting "short periods of sudden depression." An amendment, that these words be left out, was moved, and it was carried by acclamation. Mr. Robert Hyde Greg moved the next resolution:—"That much of the distress under which the people suffer is to be traced to the enormous amount and unequal pressure of taxation; an amount which this meeting is of opinion is unnecessary for the purposes of a government anxious only to promote the public welfare." He exposed the inequality

of taxation, and compared the extravagance of the nation to that of an individual who constantly drew on his banker without making deposits; said that to have a reduction of taxes we must have a reduction of expenditure; and declared that the cost of our army, our navy, our colonies, and every other branch of public expenditure, must be cut down to meet the exigencies of the country. The motion was seconded by Mr. John Brooks, afterwards to distinguish himself by his energetic opposition to the corn law, and his munificent support of the funds required to agitate successfully the question of free-trade. He exhibited a list of bad debts he had made in the year 1829, to the amount of £11,180 5s. 9d., and to the amount of £981 11s. 10d. from the first of January to that day, "and this," said he, "is a pretty commencement for the year 1830." The resolution was carried unanimously. The next resolution enumerated particular instances of unnecessary expenditure, was moved by Mr. B. Grime, seconded by Mr. Pulein, and carried unanimously. The next resolution, attributing a great portion of the distress to the operation of the corn law, was entrusted to me. I recommended the attentive perusal of Col. Thompson's *Corn Law Catechism*; and proceeded, at greater length than I had ever spoken in public before, to expose the mischievous effects of the landlords' monopoly. In the course of my address, I resolved that the words "radical parliamentary reform" should, for the first time, ring through that hall. "We see," I said, "the misery that exists around us, and we know that no man, whoever he may be, can deny its existence, unless he happen to be one of those persons who think all are well because themselves are well. Why do not members of parliament see this? Because they neither go amongst the people nor represent the people; and allow me to say," and I said it very quietly, "that there never will be a proper sympathy for the people until they are represented in parliament,—till there shall be a

thorough—an effectual—a radical reform.” There was here a loud burst of cheering, frequently renewed, each time with additional vehemence, during which the boroughreeve begged that I would keep to the question. I said, “I have done, sir, but I trust that ere long we shall have an opportunity of discussing the question in this hall, for I cannot doubt that the boroughreeve and constables, who so readily convened this meeting, if requested by their fellow-townsmen to convene a meeting for the consideration of reform, will readily agree to it.” We had not long to wait for the opportunity. The subsequent speakers were Mr. Elijah Dixon, one of the imprisoned in 1817; Mr. W. Harvey, one of the “small band” of 1815; Mr. P. T. Candelet, who had always worked with that band; Mr. J. Whyatt, who said that politics were as much a man’s business as his own particular trade; Mr. J. C. Dyer, who was afterwards to do essential service to the cause of political and commercial reform by his public spirit and close logic; and Mr. Robert Bunting, who was, as the tory newspaper truly said, “an acute man though no orator.”

A week after this meeting had been held the “Society for the Preservation of Ancient Footpaths” had occasion to exercise its functions in defence of a public right; and the two events furnished the *Guardian* newspaper with occasion to animadvert strongly on former friends who had taken a part in both. Mr. George Jones had built a handsome house at Pendleton, close to a footpath, which he had taken the liberty to divert in order to make space for a lawn in front of his new mansion. The society had protested against the encroachment, and were at first promised alterations, with the view of evading their demands, and then set at defiance by an insolently couched refusal to do anything. The following account of their proceedings is from the *Manchester Times* of March 6th:—

“On the afternoon of Monday Mr. Richard Potter, Mr. William Harvey, Mr. W. B. Grime, Mr. R. Bunting, and Mr. Archibald

Prentice, members of the Footpath Society, proceeded to the ground. On their way they fell in with a person named Murray, an overlooker of Mr. Jones's workmen, and in conversation with him, had their own previous impression of the exact course of the footway confirmed. Mr. Jones, and Mr. Street, his surveyor, were in waiting, and Mr. Grime was deputed to state to the former the intentions of the society. He said that no satisfactory reply having been given to their repeated applications, they had resolved to assert the public right, which they felt to be their duty, however unpleasant it might be to them personally to seem arrayed against an individual. They would, however, he added, carry the resolution of the society into effect in an amicable spirit. Mr. Jones very warmly retorted that he saw nothing amicable in the proceeding. The society, he said, were not satisfied with the public having obtained a better road than he had shut up, and he could therefore only attribute their conduct to private malice and envy. The gentlemen of the society making allowance for the irritation of Mr. Jones's feelings, made little reply to his invectives, and he, probably mistaking the cause of their forbearance, grew still more abusive, and when they reached that part of the carriage road where the opening was to be made in the direction of the old footway, and were making preparations to remove the obstructions, he said the proceeding was most unneighbourly, most malicious, and most ungentlemanly. Mr. Prentice said that these were terms which, under circumstances less irritating to Mr. Jones's feelings, he, for one, would not submit to hear. Very few members of the committee knew Mr. Jones, and some of them probably now saw him for the first time, and, consequently, could have no malice to him. 'Just to show you, Mr. Jones,' added Mr. Prentice, 'that we are not actuated by any such feeling, I, who am a stranger to you, will be the first to put my hand to remove your fence.' He then, assisted by a labourer, who had been brought for the purpose, wrenched out the bolts which connected the wrought-iron hurdles that topped the fence, and the workman, with a spade, began to level down the bank, and to make such an opening into the pleasure-grounds as would make the path easily accessible. During this process Mr. Jones, in great irritation, charged the society with partiality in their operations, in having selected him, while other persons, who had done as he had done, were allowed to escape. Mr. Potter begged leave to remind Mr. Jones of the cases against Mr. Wright, of Flixton, against the Duke of Bridgewater, and lately against Mr. Hall, of Ordsall Lane, and several other persons,

to show that the society, whenever they had a clear case, would assert the public rights. The workmen having now levelled down the bank, the deputation walked across the grounds directly in front of and close to Mr. Jones's newly-erected mansion, making their way through the lately laid-out shrubberies and flower parterres. Where the footway joined the carriage road at the other extremity of Mr. Jones's lawn, another bank needed to be levelled, and here again Mr. Prentice volunteered to be the first in removing the fence, repeating that no malice or unneighbourly feeling could possibly influence him, who had never spoken to Mr. Jones before, except on one occasion in the Salford Town Hall, where he had experienced much courtesy from him. The society, he said, were actuated solely by a desire to protect the public rights, and Mr. Jones might rest assured that they would not cease their operations till every footway within twenty miles of Manchester, that had been or should be illegally stopped, was opened. Mr. Jones continued, however, to complain of the proceedings, and said, if they must have a foot-path, he should dig one ten feet under the level of his lawn. "No," said Mr. Prentice, "we will not permit you to do so, Mr. Jones. The public have a right to their old footway as it was, and are not to be sent along a deep ditch. The same law which enables us to open this footway will compel you to make it a good one." The opening having been effected, and men being set to prevent its being again obstructed, the deputation took their leave, Mr. Jones assuring them, as they went, that he should immediately apply for a magistrate's order to have the road diverted."

Mr. Jones, on more deliberate consideration, made application to the Society for leave to make such an alteration as would considerably shorten the distance; to which the members, passing over his previous insolence, gave their consent. But the editor of the *Guardian* represented his old friends as disregarding private rights, and, connecting the matter with the public meeting, as equally regardless of vested interests. Five letters, each with the name of the writer, appeared in my paper of the 13th. Mr. Shuttleworth replies to an attack on his arguments, and thus concludes:—"Regarding the offensive tone of the passage, not as mere rudeness, but as a manifestation of the ill-regulated temperament which, occasionally sacrificing public

interests to party and personal insinuations, bickerings, and contentions, has estranged from the editor his private friends, and sunk and degraded him in public estimation, I cannot, with reference to the forebodings I entertain of its ultimate influence on himself, and on account of the remembrance of past acquaintance and connection, contemplate its present display without the sincerest regret." Mr. W. B. Grime says:—"Nobody but the editor of the *Guardian* would have had the impudence to assert that the opening this road was a virtual departure from the objects for which the society was established. Censure from such a man is praise." Mr. Thomas Potter says:—"If Mr. Taylor's object be to raise an impression that I, like Mr. Jones, illegally stopped a footpath, he endeavours to make the public believe *what he knows to be untrue*." Mr. Richard Potter, in reply to an assertion in the *Guardian*, that the requisition to call the public meeting had not been sent to the editors for signature, gives the affidavit of one of his clerks that it was presented to Mr. Jeremiah Garnett, who said "that there was one point he objected to, but would consider of it, and if he determined to sign it, would call on Mr. Potter for that purpose," which he did not do. A letter from myself follows, in which I tell Mr. Taylor, in reply to some injurious insinuations, that his repeatedly detected falsehoods had deprived him of all claim to credence. It is painful to record these derelictions of principle and ruptures of ancient friendship, but having gratefully acknowledged Mr. Taylor's former services to the public, I do not see that I should suppress these passages.

There were, as yet, few symptoms of dawn in the political horizon. In the legislature there was a determined resistance to every proposed reform, however small. A motion for the transference of the East Retford seats to Birmingham was negatived by 126 votes against 99. In the debate Mr. Huskisson alluded to the formation of the first political union:—"He saw in Birmingham lately an

association which, as far as he could perceive its elements, principles, and operations, seemed exactly formed on the model of the Catholic Association; for it had its subscriptions, its meetings, its discussions, and its agitator. The purpose of this association was to raise a universal cry for parliamentary reform—to carry the question by exaggerating the difficulties, abuses, and distresses of the country. He would rather see the leader of the Birmingham meeting here, as the representative of that town, than in conducting such an association, sending forth those statements and appeals to the country, which was, perhaps, too prone, at the present moment, to act on the apprehensions generated by them. Lord John Russell attempted a slight change in the representation by moving for leave to bring in a bill to enable Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds to return members to parliament. This was resisted—by Huskisson, amongst others—on the ground that such a beginning would lead to wider innovations on the constitution of the country, and endanger the succession to the throne. Mr. O'Connell moved for a bill to establish universal suffrage, triennial parliaments, and vote by ballot. Lord John Russell moved two resolutions in favour of an increase in the number of representatives, and for the additional ones being given to large towns and populous counties. The motion and the resolutions were both negatived by large majorities. The tory rule had been shaken, but the whigs had shown little disposition to join the people in their demand for reform. Men looked for a change, but knew not whence it would come. On the 26th of June George IV died.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SYMPTOMS OF THE DAWN.

THERE was not much grief at the death of George the Fourth—not much joy at the accession of William the Fourth. There was a plain, unaffected, natural man instead of a selfish voluptuary; but William retained George's ministers, who were disliked by a considerable portion of the community because they had conceded some reforms, and by a still more considerable portion because they continued to be opposed to all others. In Manchester there was a great concourse of persons in the procession on the proclamation of the new king; but the meeting held in the Town Hall, convened by the boroughreeve and constables, to vote an address to his majesty, gave very slight indication of the existence of loyalty, for when the business should have commenced there were not more than twenty persons present. I said it would be a farce to vote an address from such a meeting, upon which Mr. Jeremiah Garnett said that he had known meetings of five or six persons transact very important business. During this conversation the meeting grew into one of about fifty persons, and then the address, which was in the usual strain of condolence and congratulation, was proposed. I moved an address as an amendment, stating that many and grievous evils were endured by his majesty's subjects, from a long course of misgovernment, and a wasteful and extravagant expenditure of the people's money, and praying him to take none into his councils "who would not honestly and zealously enforce the most rigid economy in every department of the public expenditure, and promote the real splendour of the throne, and its legitimate and beneficial

influence, by the reformation of abuses which are alike derogatory to the sovereign, and offensive, oppressive, and degrading to the people." Mr. Garnett expressed his dislike to politics being introduced into the address, and was supported by a Captain Grimshaw, of whom we shall hear more hereafter, and the voting was twenty-eight for the original motion and twenty-three for mine. An address from twenty-eight persons out of a population of 250,000 was not very complimentary to the new sovereign.

In my paper of July 31st I find that I said of France: "Royal ordinances have dissolved the chamber ere its newly-elected members had met, suppressed the liberty of the press, and altered the law of elections. The government of France, which, a few days ago, was a monarchy, kept in check by the representatives of the people, is now a simple despotism. If these measures do not produce *another revolution*, there is a less ardent desire for liberty than we have supposed to exist." The revolution had already taken place. France, in three days, had shaken off the despotism, and the friends of liberty throughout Europe rejoiced in her emancipation, and hailed it as the promise of beneficial changes in every country which was suffering under tyrannical rule. The boroughreeve and constables Manchester declined to call a meeting of the inhabitants to give public expression to their sentiments on the occasion; but the meeting, notwithstanding, was held on Monday, the 23rd of August; Mr. Thomas Harbottle in the chair. The speakers, amidst enthusiastic cheers from the crowded assemblage, all referred to the necessity of reform at home. "Let us not," said Mr. Mark Philips, soon to be representative of our then unrepresented town, "in our admiration of that glorious burst of freedom which has just been exhibited in France, forget for a single moment that some of our own institutions at home are incompatible with the spirit of the age; let it not be a reproach to us that whilst France is making rapid strides, England is standing still."

Mr. Thomas Hopkins said: "Monarchs must now see that it is their interest as well as their duty to move with the people. The great want of the French people has been a real representation, and the same want is felt in all the nations of Europe." Mr. Richard Potter, who was then making a gallant attempt to open the borough of Wigan, where certain corporation-made burgesses had usurped the right of voting, which had once belonged to all the householders, said: "Sure am I that this glorious event will make the boroughmongers of England fear and tremble, and induce the people of England to throw off a yoke which was degrading alike to king and people." Mr. R. H. Greg said that the ministers of our own country would not now dare to support despotism in France. Mr. G. Hadfield hoped that England would so far imitate the example of France as to insist on reform in parliament, and the abolition of the grinding and iniquitous corn laws. Mr. J. E. Taylor was scarcely allowed to speak, but his tone was nearly accordant with that of the meeting. Mr. Shuttleworth alluded to the employment by the late French government of mercenaries of other nations. "One of the advantages," he said, "which will result from the change is, that the Swiss cantons will be deprived of the best market for their detestable commerce in soldiers,—for that foul traffic in the living blood, and bones, and sinews of their population by which those cantons are stained with the deepest disgrace, and human nature itself is insulted and dishonoured." Mr. Edward Baxter trusted that the example of France would not be lost on his own countrymen, and that England would not be long before she obtained a thorough reform in the House of Commons. Mr. J. C. Dyer said that it had been shown what might be the result when rich and poor formed one common union, in one common effort, for the overthrow of tyranny and the establishment of liberty. The address to the French people was agreed to, and Messrs. Mark Philips, Alexander Kay,

and Joseph C. Dyer were appointed as a deputation to proceed with it to Paris, where, with Dr. Bowring, they were received with great distinction by the French government.

The electors of the kingdom partook little of the aroused national spirit. In the small boroughs, which sent to parliament a majority of the House of Commons, they were few in number, and almost all dependent or corrupt. Their rulers or purchasers thought the administration too conceding, and members were sent rather to impede than to promote reform. The few large constituencies shared in the prevailing hope that the time was come for some change in that boasted "glorious constitution" which had worked so ill, and, at the general election, Yorkshire returned Mr. Brougham, and Middlesex, Mr. Hume. No one could tell how a house so constituted, or a ministry so little supported, would act. The newly-elected House of Commons was not to meet till November, and there was an anxious period between. In the meantime disturbances again broke out in the agricultural districts—always the first originators of and sufferers by riot. The much-protected farm labourers made war upon the much-protected farmers, and their kind common protectors, the landowners, could do nothing to repress the destructive spirit. Stack-yards were blazing in the dark nights through all the south-eastern counties. The rick-burning, which commenced in Kent, spread into Hampshire, Wiltshire, Buckinghamshire, Sussex, and Surrey. In Birmingham the people took a different course. They attributed the evils under which they suffered to misgovernment, and formed a political union to reform the constitution.

In this state of the country, parliament met on the 1st November, and the king's speech was made next day. In the debate upon the address in the House of Lords, the Duke of Wellington made a declaration, which did more in stimulating the demand for reform than even the results of the French and Belgian revolutions. His folly may be

accounted for by the supposition that, after the outcry from the bigotted, which followed his concessions to dissenters and catholics, he was hurriedly eager to assure his party of his determination to concede no more. Miss Martineau says his friends imputed his blunder to a deafness which had been growing upon him, which prevented his hearing what was said by men of his own party. Earl Grey had alluded to the necessity of parliamentary reform. The Duke, throwing to the winds the Fabian tactics by which he had been distinguished in the Peninsular war,—and observe the iteration and reiteration of the unmisunderstandable declaration, so often quoted afterwards,—he emphatically said :—

“He had never heard or read of any measure, up to the present moment, which could in any degree satisfy his mind that the state of the representation, *could be improved*, or be rendered *more satisfactory to the country at large* than at the present time. He was fully convinced that the country possessed, *at the present moment*, a legislature which answered *all the good purposes of legislation*, and this to a greater degree than any legislature ever answered in *any country whatever*. He would go further, and say, that the legislature and the system of representation *possessed the full and entire confidence of the country*—DESERVEDLY possessed that confidence. *He would go still further*, and say, that if, at the present moment he had imposed upon him the duty of forming a legislature for *any country*, and particularly for any country like this, in possession of great property of various descriptions, he did not mean to say he could form such a legislature as they possessed now, *for the nature of man was incapable of reaching such excellence at once*, but his great endeavour would be, to form some description of legislature which would *produce the same results*. The representation of the people at present contained a large body of the *property* of the country, and in which *the landed interest had a preponderating influence*. Under these circumstances, he was *not* prepared to bring forward *any* measure of the description alluded to by the noble lord. He was not only *not* prepared, but he would at once declare that, so far as he was concerned, as long as he held *any* station in the government of the country, he should always feel it to be his duty to *resist* such measures when proposed by others.”

Never was the hacknied quotation, *quem Deus vult perdere*, more quoted than it was now. This was on the 2nd of November; on the 7th the Duke increased his unpopularity by advising the king that it was unsafe to entrust himself in the city; on the 15th Sir Henry Parnell's motion for a select committee on the civil list was carried against ministers by 233 votes against 204; on the 16th the Duke of Wellington and his colleagues resigned; on the 22nd Earl Grey's ministry came into office, and announced, through their chief, that they would act on the principles of peace, retrenchment, and reform, which became the watch-words during the approaching contest. Time was allowed for the re-election of members who had accepted office, and in December parliament was prorogued to the 3rd of February.

There was time between that 22nd of November and that 3rd of February for the people to think and resolve. In Manchester there were some reformers who placed full faith in the sincerity of the declaration that peace, retrenchment, and reform, would be promoted. There were others who thought that, either to support ministers if they were sincere, or to urge them onwards if they were not, it was desirable to form an association ready to act when occasion required. The ministerial declaration was made on Monday the 22nd; on Wednesday the 24th a crowded meeting was held in the Mechanics' Institution. A Political Union was formed, and the following were appointed as the members of its council:—

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| Eli Atkin, | John Fielden, | John Massey, |
| J. Barrow, | Robert Froggatt, | Thomas Merry, |
| George Bentham, | Thomas Fielden, | William Parr, |
| Robert Bunting, | P. Gendel, | Archibald Prentice, |
| P. T. Candelet, | Edmund Grundy, | William Pickering, |
| James Cox, | Geo. Greenough, | Roger Reyner, |
| Elijah Dixon, | James Hampson, | Ralph Shaw, |
| John Dracup, | W. T. Hesketh, | David McWilliams, |
| Henry Day, | James Hulne, | John Whyatt, |
| Rowland Detroiser, | James Jones, | G. H. Wiunder. |

With the exception of the Messrs. Fielden, great manufacturers, and Mr. Edmund Grundy, a gentleman of good fortune, retired from business, the council consisted principally of shopkeepers, with a few men of the working class, but they were men earnest in the cause they had undertaken to promote, and they were afterwards joined by persons of higher commercial standing. Mr. Wheeler, in his History of Manchester, says that the Union "never attained any influence;" but ministers did not think so when they needed its services, and the enemies of reform did not think so when they felt its power, not of stimulation, but of repression, for disturbances with violence would to them have been very acceptable.

The opening of the Manchester and Liverpool Railway was one of the events of 1830, which was not without its influence, in future days, on the progress of public opinion. The anti-corn-law agitation was wonderfully forwarded by quick railway travelling and the penny postage. Even in 1830 the railway promoted the cause of reform. It was an innovation on the old ways of travelling, and a successful one; and people thought that something like this achievement in constructive and mechanical science might be effected in political science. It brought, besides, a little proprietary borough, which nobody had ever seen before, into full view. I recollect, when passing over it for the first time, I said to a friend: "Parliamentary reform must follow soon after the opening of this road. A million of persons will pass over it in the course of this year, and see that hitherto unseen little village of Newton; and they must be convinced of the absurdity of its sending two members to parliament, whilst Manchester sends none."

On Thursday, the 20th of January, 1831, a meeting was held in the Town Hall, to consider the propriety of petitioning for a reform of the representative system. It was called by 233 requisitionists, including many of the first merchants, manufacturers, and shopkeepers. The boroughreeve and

constables had declined to call it, alleging the "excitement" that prevailed in the town and neighbourhood as their excuse; their refusal, of course, adding to the excitement. The use of the hall was, however, granted by the police commissioners, and it was filled with a most respectable auditory. Mr. Edward Baxter, who occupied the chair, inculcated the duty of every unrepresented locality standing forward, because, if they remained silent, it might be said that they were indifferent about their rights. Mr. Richard Potter spoke at some length on the necessity of reform, and adduced a number of instances of the insufficiency and the inequality of representation, and he quoted a statement that had been sent out by me, showing that the parish of unrepresented Manchester contained as many inhabitants as there were in 130 boroughs which returned 260 members, a majority of the English members in the House of Commons. Mr. J. Shuttleworth made an eloquent and effective speech, in the course of which he said: "We are on the eve of a great, a radical change. No other change can be effected; other means have been tried in abundance and found wanting. Our law books are encumbered with no less than about eighty statutes, regularly made and provided, as their preambles state, to secure and protect freedom of election, and to prevent bribery and corruption. And yet, in defiance of this multitude of laws, it is notorious that freedom of election has diminished, and bribery and corruption have increased. To continue patching and bolstering up the old system by additional laws is, therefore, clearly vain and illusory. An entirely new system must be introduced. There is no other mode of redressing present grievances and averting future. The House of Commons, as now constituted, is an assemblage in which the people, whose house it ought to be, have no power. The reform must be such as will return members who will have no interest in misgovernment,—members who will act for the benefit of the whole community, and not, as hereto-

fore, for the exclusive benefit of themselves and borough-mongers,—members who will no longer sacrifice the interests of the many to the interests of the few.” Mr. R. H. Greg showed that in the early periods of our parliamentary history there was a much wider extension of the right of voting than there was now, and that a large measure of reform would be no more than a return to ancient custom. Mr. Thomas Hopkins gave some forcible illustrations of the inequality of representation, and of the excessively heavy pressure of taxation. I followed, and argued the necessity of the reform being either wide, sweeping, and effectual, or such as would give a guarantee of such ultimate result. Mr. Detrosier, a very eloquent young man, who had sought and found knowledge under unusual difficulties, strongly advocated the rights of the many. Mr. Mark Philips said, that while unanimity was most desirable, he thought that reform would not be complete without the ballot; and Mr. A. Kay urged the necessity of short parliaments. Mr. J. C. Dyer, who had become known and appreciated, made an able speech. In reference to the ballot he said:—

“He had the pleasure to receive, in France, a great many powerful proofs of its efficacy in overturning one of the most gross despotisms that ever afflicted the human race. The ballot, in the hands of only 80,000 electors, overturned the power of the Bourbons. If these electors had had to vote openly, in the face of the bayonets of the soldiery, that tyranny would have been established, or the alternative would have been a most bloody revolution. The ballot accomplished the overthrow of that despotism quietly and effectually. In America (where Mr. Dyer was born) he had witnessed the operation of the vote by ballot to a great extent, and at a most stormy time, when the effects of the first French revolution were dividing the world, and causing most nations to gird on the armour of war. The ballot was used without a single soldier requiring to be employed to preserve order; and the electors did not fix their choice upon the low, ignorant, or the violent, but on the most virtuous and talented men the nation possessed.”

On Monday, January 31st, a meeting was held in the Town Hall, Salford, Mr. William Hill, boroughreeve, in the

chair, to consider the propriety of petitioning that that town should be represented in parliament. The speakers were Mr. John Smith, Mr. Jerry Lees, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. W. Harvey, Mr. Joseph Brotherton, Mr. Lot Gardner, and Mr. J. G. Frost. Resolutions were passed in favour of including the town, as a separate borough, in any measure that might be brought forward for parliamentary reform; and an influential committee, which afterwards succeeded in its object, was appointed to carry the resolutions into effect.

Amidst the cheering hopes of reform, and the active demonstrations to secure it, there was much to throw gloom on the commencement of 1831. Two special commissioners had been appointed to try the prisoners who had been apprehended during the riek-burning disturbances, not yet fully prevented. These commissions were opened at Winchester on the 20th, and at Reading on the 27th December, and proceeded to Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Buckinghamshire, and other counties. The list of convictions and sentences is a melancholy one. On the 9th of January, judgment of death was recorded against twenty-three prisoners, for the destruction of a paper machine in Buckinghamshire; in Dorset, on the 11th, against three for extorting money, and two for robbery; at Norwich, fifty-five prisoners were convicted of machine-breaking and rioting; at Ipswich, three for extorting money; at Petworth, twenty-six for machine-breaking and rioting; at Gloucester, upwards of thirty; at Oxford, twenty-nine; and at Winchester, out of upwards of forty convicted, six were left for execution. Four of these were afterwards respited; but two of them were executed on the 15th. At Salisbury, forty-four prisoners were convicted, of whom two were executed on the 25th. In the whole, upwards of eight hundred of the rioters were tried before the commission; and all of those who were convicted, with the exception of the four cases mentioned, were sentenced to various terms of transportation and im-

prisonment. Sad commencement this for the year of hope. In the great manufacturing districts there was no rioting; the people there better knew the causes of their distress.

Parliament was opened on the 3rd of February. On the first day of the session Earl Grey stated that "ministers had succeeded in framing a measure which, they were persuaded, would prove efficient, without exceeding the bounds of that wise moderation with which such a measure should be accompanied. Lord John Russell made a similar notification to the House of Commons. It was not until the 1st of March that the ministerial plan of reform was explained, the nation in the meantime waiting the disclosure with great impatience. The measure was quite as broad and effective as the people expected—broader than was expected by those who doubted whig sincerity and courage. My comment upon it was:—"Our readers know that we are advocates of the broadest possible suffrage, of the annual exercise of the elective right, and of the protection afforded to the electors by secret voting; and that, consequently, no scheme of reform which does not embrace all these points, can receive our unqualified approbation; but we never allowed our wishes so far to get the better of our judgment as to suppose that we should have a perfect system of representation all at once. We have looked forward to a prolonged contest, in which we should gain a little now, and a little then, and thus be enabled to take fresh ground, and to press forward till complete victory was obtained. We did not, of course, expect that even the most zealously reforming administration, considering the strength of adverse interests which would have to be encountered, would venture to propose anything like a perfect scheme. We have it now before us, and though it falls far short of what we demand, and what we believe we shall ultimately, and at no very distant period, obtain, it is a great deal better than we expected, and ministers have our most hearty thanks for it, and they shall have

our strenuous support to carry it into effect, should the boroughmongers, as it is probable they will, force them to appeal to the country." I believe that such were the opinions, throughout the country, of the class of persons who professed rational radicalism, as distinguished from the radicalism which would have all or nothing.

After a debate which was prolonged for seven days, the motion for leave to bring in the bill was agreed to without a division. The utmost excitement, during this tardy progress, was manifested in the country. On Wednesday, the 9th of March, a meeting, to thank ministers, was held in the Town Hall, Manchester, called by the boroughreeve and constables—the first *they* had called on the subject of parliamentary reform—and many were present who never before had taken any part in the movement. But it had now the sanction of the whig administration, and, it was believed, of the whig aristocracy generally. Not many new speakers, however, had yet appeared. The chair having been taken by the boroughreeve, Mr. James Burt, the meeting was addressed by Mr. Richard Potter, who drew a strong contrast between Mr. Peel's opposition to the disfranchisement of votes in English rotten boroughs, and his former haste to disfranchise the whole of the Irish forty-shilling freeholders. Mr. E. Baxter asked whether, if the king had the power to confer seats, he would select the village of Newton or the great town of Manchester? Mr. Mark Philips made a spirited speech, in which he called on the county not to waste its power in a skirmish of out-posts, but to concentrate its strength and bear down upon the corruptionists in one united and overwhelming mass. Mr. John Shuttleworth spoke with great eloquence and effect. Mr. R. H. Greg said, contrasting Charles X and William IV, he had often heard of the revolutionary spirit of the people, but he thought those complaints might be retorted on the sovereigns. Mr. George Hadfield, an early and decided reformer, but who had not taken much part in

public meetings, quoted Mr. Pitt's saying, that no honest man could be minister, in his time, as the house was constituted, and said that its truth was as obvious now as it was then. The eloquent Detrosier again asserted the right of the over-taxed, corn-law-oppressed poor to representation. Mr. E. J. Loyd, one of the 1688 whigs, expressed his gratitude to the administration. Mr. James Wood, who afterwards recommended Mr. H. H. Birley as a fit member for Manchester, said he had travelled all night to have the pleasure of attending the meeting. Mr. Absalom Watkin spoke briefly but energetically. Mr. G. W. Wood, another 1688 whig, said he heartily joined in the resolution of thanks to ministers. Mr. J. C. Dyer, Mr. Thomas Potter, and Mr. Alexander Kay spoke briefly but emphatically; and the vote of thanks was passed unanimously.

A little episode in the proceedings showed the jealousy with which recent converts were received, when there was a belief that their conversion was with a view to future favours from the new constituencies. A motion had been made that the petition to the lords should be presented by Earl Grey, and that to the commons by Lord Althorp. Mr. G. W. Wood, said he would prefer its being presented by Lord Stanley and Mr. Wilson Patten, members for the county, who had been very attentive to the deputation sent to London to obtain the repeal of the calico-print duties. Some one asked if Mr. Patten was a reformer. Mr. Wood said he did not know; but it was desirable that he should be one, and he hoped their confidence would make him one. Mr. Thomas Potter said it was a piece of great presumption in Mr. Wood to find fault with the arrangements of the committee. I protested against bribing any one with confidence before he had earned it. The time was coming when they would not need to bribe men to be reformers. The time was come when those who wished, like Mr. Wood, to be thought reformers, should come forward and join the ranks of the reformers. To Lord Stanley, and Mr. Wood,

and Mr. Wood's junto the police commissioners owed their banishment from that hall. Mr. Wood attempted to reply, but the meeting would not permit him. Mr. Shuttleworth said he hoped the boroughreeve would allow nothing but explanation, for, otherwise, Mr. Wood would continue addressing them until the sun set. Mr. Wood was at length permitted to say that he gave an unqualified denial to Mr. Prentice's statement, to which Mr. Prentice said he could prove it, and that Lord John Russell had, some few years ago, been deceived by the committee of which Mr. Wood was a member into the belief that a £20 qualification would be acceptable to the people of Manchester.

On the 14th of March the bill was read a first time. On the 20th the second reading was proposed, and carried by a majority of ONE, in the fullest house ever known to have divided, the numbers being, 302 for the motion, and 301 against it. This narrow majority—this almost lost sanction of the house—increased the excitement of the country, which showed that the promised reform, or the mutilation of the "bill," would not be quietly submitted to. The obstructives, however, dared all the consequences. On the 18th of April the house went into committee, when a motion was made by General Gascoyne to the effect, that the number of members for England and Wales ought not to be diminished, and the house divided with a majority of eight against ministers. This was virtually to save a number of the rotten boroughs, and to deny to Scotland and Ireland the increased proportion of members to which they were entitled. Ministers tendered their resignation to the king, but it was declined. On the Wednesday night, or rather on Thursday morning, they were again defeated, when Mr. Banks moved an adjournment, and obtained a majority of twenty-two, thus refusing to go into the question of supply which should have occupied the house. The king was now appealed to, and he resolved to dissolve parliament. Miss Martineau gives a graphic account of the

scene between his Majesty and Earl Grey, with one or two of his colleagues. "He was yielding—had yielded—but with strong expressions of reluctance, when that reluctance was suddenly changed into alacrity by the news which was brought him of the tone used in the House of Lords about the impossibility of his actually dissolving parliament, undoubted as was his constitutional power to do so. 'What! Did they dare to meddle with his prerogative?' the king exclaimed; he would presently show them what he could and would do. He had given his promise; and now he would lose no time; he would go instantly—that very moment—and dissolve parliament. 'As soon as the royal carriage could be got ready,' his ministers agreed. 'Never mind the carriage—send for a hackney coach,' replied the king—a saying which spread over the kingdom, and much enhanced his popularity for the moment."

I was in London at the time, and had been told in the morning by Mr. John Wood, member for Preston, that the house would probably be dissolved that day. I had come from Jeremy Bentham's house, through St. James's Park, and through the Horse Guards, to see what might happen; and there was the king on his way, with a guard of cavalry, riding wide of his carriage on each side, not preventing persons from coming close up to him. One rough sailor-looking man rushed to the side of the carriage, pulled off his hat, waved it round his head, and shouted, "Turn the rogues out your majesty," and his majesty had an air of determination on his countenance which declared that he meant as much, and without ceremony. In the midst of a hot wrangle in the House of Lords on the prerogative of the king, the sound of cannon announced his approach. There was a cry of "the king, the king." Lord Mansfield was, amidst the confusion, protesting against the conduct of ministers in "conspiring together against the state, and of making the sovereign the instrument of his own destruction," when the king appeared, and the com-

mons were summoned, and drawn from an equally exciting scene in their own house. The king began in a dignified and determined voice, and ended thus:—"I have come to meet you for the purpose of proroguing this parliament, with a view to its immediate dissolution. I have been induced to resort to this measure, for the purpose of ascertaining the sense of my people in the circumstances of the country, in the way in which it can most constitutionally and most authentically be expressed, on the expediency of making such changes in the representation as circumstances may appear to require, and which, founded upon the acknowledged principles of the constitution, may tend to uphold the just rights and prerogatives of the crown, and to give security to the liberties of the people. * * *

In resolving to recur to the sense of my people, in the present circumstances of the country, I have been influenced only by a parental anxiety for the contentment and happiness of my subjects, to promote which, I rely, with confidence on your continued and zealous assistance." A proclamation, declaring the dissolution of the parliament, appeared next day, and the new writs were made returnable on the 14th of June,

CHAPTER XXIV.

RECOLLECTIONS OF JEREMY BENTHAM.—THE AUTHOR'S TRIAL FOR LIBEL.

My visit to London, at this important crisis, brought me into friendly communication with a man whom I had long honoured. I had long held the name of Bentham in high veneration. His writings had been my political text books, and, as he had been an author nearly twenty years before I was born, my first impressions of them were as precious legacies from the mighty dead, rather than as the productions of a contemporary. When I had taken my station in the ranks of those who were combatting for reform, and, as I believed had been instrumental in popularising some of his doctrines, and thereby rendering them, in my comparatively narrow sphere, the guiding principles of many ardent friends of liberty, my feeling of reverence for the great apostle of reform did not wear off; for I heard of him as an aged recluse, occupying in useful labours the short time that might still be allotted to him, after having lived a dozen years beyond the "few and evil" days which the Psalmist has assigned to man; measuring out his remaining minutes in works for the promotion of "the greatest happiness;" seeing none but men, who, from their talents or station, were likely to carry his principles into practical operation; and never stirring beyond his threshold but to take his accustomed circumgyrations in a garden which had been Milton's, and therefore, in itself, an object exciting elevated and spirit-stirring associations in the mind of every admirer of high intellect and lover of freedom. With such an estimation of Bentham, and not daring to hope that I should ever be admitted to any communication with the

venerable jurist, it may be imagined with what exultation I read on the title-page of a book sent me (the first volume of his Constitutional Code) my own name neatly inscribed, with the addition of "from Jeremy Bentham. Q. S. P. 11th of April, 1831." I know not if any lover ever read with more delight the first epistle from his mistress than I did the note accompanying the present, in which I found myself recognised as a fellow-labourer with him "in the field of parliamentary reform—in the vineyard of law reform—in the field of veracity and justice." As I had to be in London in a week or ten days, I delayed to answer certain queries he had put to me, in the hope that, should I find no friend having the privilege of admission to the venerable jurist, I might have the greater chance of being allowed a minute or two in his presence. Colonel Thompson and Dr. Bowring, from whom I could ask for an introduction, were both absent. In this difficulty I put a bold face upon the matter, went right off to Queen-square Place, pulled the bell, my heart palpitating the while, and presented my card. I was not kept long in suspense. The servant returning almost immediately, said Mr. Bentham would be with me in a few minutes.

The walls of the room into which I was shown were covered with a dark-coloured Indian paper, seemingly as ancient as its owner, with strange birds of the size of pheasants, represented as seated on the branches of vine-like stems, with leaves anonymous to the botanist, and flowers as yet nondescript. The chairs and a large book-case were of the same date, dark and massive, and on a table stood a noble bust, inscribed A JEREMIE BENTHAM, P. J. DAVID, with the motto, "PLURIMORUM MAXIMA FELICITAS." Amongst the newspapers that lay upon the table was one in French, printed at New Orleans, containing a notice of the adoption of some of Bentham's "Codifications" by one of the South American republics, and I was deep in the middle of this when the door opened and the venerable

sage, his long silvery hair hanging down on his shoulders, and his fine features, still fresh and florid, beaming with benevolence, appeared before me. All doubt about the nature of my reception was at once dispelled, for he approached me holding out both hands and exclaiming, "Ah, I am glad, very glad to see you. I expected you to write, but I am much better pleased that you have come to see me." After a short conversation he invited me to accompany him in his daily walk round the garden, and there I accommodated my pace to his quick short shuffle, and we held converse on the promotion of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. It was enough to walk in the garden of the patriot poet with the patriot jurist, but I felt it as an additional gratification that I was enabled to tell him I had good reason to believe than an ancestor of my own, the right-hand man of Lockhart, the parliamentary general, had there often discoursed with the author of the *Defensio pro Populo*. When I conceived that I was about to take my leave, probably for ever, of the aged reformer, at the little gate that opened into St. James's Park, he said, "You must not leave London without having a social chat with me," and invited me to dine with him next day. A "social chat" with Bentham! To fill up the measure of that day's enjoyment, I had not been five minutes absent from him before I saw the king hurrying down to the House of Lords to do that which never English sovereign had done before—to dissolve a parliament because it was adverse to reform. It seemed to me that the seed had been sown in good ground and that it was bringing forth fruit abundantly. If in the reign of that sovereign the produce was thirty-fold, may it be a hundred-fold in the reign of our youthful Queen.

Half-past seven o'clock next evening found me sitting at a neatly set out and *recherché* dinner in Bentham's library, the single French lamp shedding its broad light on the table, but leaving the books which lined the walls in a

darkness visible. We sat on a platform raised about three feet from the floor, and extending to within about three feet of the wall on each side. The space between the floor and the platform I found was intended as a well to contain hot air—a Russian mode of heating apartments, recommended by Bentham's brother, Sir Samuel. The conversation of my host was light and playful, but full of vigour, beautifully combining the wisdom of the sage and the simplicity and gaiety of the child. I expressed the pleasure I felt in observing that advanced years had not impaired his cheerfulness. "Sir," said he, "I cultivate cheerfulness as a habit. Besides, I have the consciousness of having for sixty years endeavoured to promote the happiness of my fellow men, and why should I be otherwise than cheerful?"

The period of my visit was one of high hope. A great principle had been asserted, and all believed that it was soon to be carried effectually into practice. The nation exulted in the expectation of a great reform of the representative system, and already were men's minds directed to the means of securing the fruits of that onward movement, and the character of many who were likely to take a prominent part in the subsequent contests was strictly scrutinized. Bentham, at eighty-two, had the confiding faith of a lad of sixteen, and unreservedly spoke of all of whom I asked his opinion, either as leading statesmen or as the probable representatives of new or reformed constituencies. Of one distinguished by great and versatile talent, he said:—"I never knew whether he was in jest or earnest. He comes here and tells me he has come to sit at the feet of Gamaliel and imbibe wisdom from my lips but when I begin to show him that his projected legal reforms have no simplicity or breadth of principle, he suddenly discovers that it is time to go away to dine with my lord this or my lady that, and I see no more of him for a month, when he comes again with the same story that he is seeking wisdom from the Gamaliel of the law, and again

he runs away so soon as I begin to show that his reforms are only poor palliatives of a system essentially bad." Of a prominent member of the commons he said:—"I think he confounds *low-priced* government with *cheap* government. What we want is *good* government. However, he does his part by endeavouring to cut off the springs of corruption."

We talked much of his friend, Dr. Bowring. He said it was a great mistake to suppose that Bowring's literature unfitted him for practical business, for he was well acquainted with all the bearings of commerce, and there was not a man in the kingdom more able to simplify and methodise the public accounts, the complexity of which seemed purposely contrived to conceal frauds and keep the country ignorant of its financial condition. "You," said he, "are practically acquainted with trade, and you shall judge of his knowledge of it. Here is a pamphlet written by him several years ago, from some very meagre notes of mine. Pray glance your eyes over it while I take a little exercise." I found the work contained a very lucid view of our commercial relations with Spain, and that the doctrines of free trade were vindicated with statesman-like ability. When I had finished my reading I looked around for my venerable host, but he had disappeared. My attention, however, was directed to something white, waving backwards and forwards in the dark space between the raised platform on which I sat and the book shelves. It was the silver hair of the octogenarian, who having poised himself on both hands and lifted up his feet, was swaying his body with all the vigour of one of the pupils in his own gymnastic school. This was his evening's exercise, as the walk round Milton's garden was his exercise of the morning.

Our conversation resumed; we went back to the days of the "Club," Dr. Johnson's corn-law tract being the train of association. Bentham had dined with some of the fraternity one day, and observing that Boswell had made some

excuse to go back to the dining room when the party were on their way to the drawing room, and having some suspicion that the excuse was not the real one, he turned back and wickedly detected Boswell in the act of swallowing glassful after glassful, hastily poured out from the bottoms of the decanters, of sundry varieties of wine that stood on the table, under the influence of which, when he joined the ladies, the biographer of Johnson became as eloquent as, according to his own account, he had ever been, under similar influence, in the presence of the Duchess of Argyle. I amused Bentham by telling him how Boswell's father, on one occasion, had combined frugality with generosity. My great-uncle had been tutor to James, and Lord Auchinleck, *more Scotorum*, had rewarded him with a kirk, a cheap way of repaying family obligation. When my relative was about to be married, the old whig lord was told by one of his friends that he ought to make the minister a present of some plate, but unwilling to lay out money, he took a dozen silver spoons from the family store, with the family initials upon them, and had the tail of the B altered, so as to convert it into a tolerably decent R, the initial of his son's instructor, and these, with half a dozen small mugs of the same metal, and similarly re-inscribed, were presented in form. The plate is now in possession of my brother, and the alteration is very obvious.

Bentham had never any sympathy with the politicians who were active from other motives than those which arose from an enlightened benevolence, and therefore he did not like Horne Tooke. "John Horne," said he, "was present one day where I was at dinner, and his amusement was in teasing two American gentlemen by sarcasms on their country, conveyed not so broadly as to justify their showing any resentment, but obviously giving them pain. I cannot understand how any man can have pleasure in giving pain to another." Nor could he, for, both from natural disposition and principle, no man was more attentive to the

amenities of life than Bentham. He *cultivated* benevolence as he did cheerfulness.

A friend who held Bentham in great veneration was with me in London, and when I left him in the evening had earnestly and solemnly conjured me, by the remembrance of a twenty years' friendship, that I should procure him something from Bentham, were it even his smallest pamphlet, with his hand-writing in it. I had teased my friend a little, saying that I could not presume to take such a liberty with a man so much beyond my intellectual rank; and, half angry at my affected fastidiousness, he muttered something about Scotch coldness and caution. I laughingly told Bentham of this, and taking down one of his volumes, he carefully selected the best of his pens and said, "I know him as a good friend of liberty, and as usefully engaged in making good books cheap;" and I delighted my friend next morning, after maliciously keeping him some time in suspense, by showing him the book and the carefully and neatly written inscription—"John Childs, Esq., from Jeremy Bentham."

From the subject of instruction of the young, which was introduced by the presentation of a little tract I had published on schools for infants, we went by a natural transition to the instruction of nations. Bentham had been reading Kotzebue's strictures on the conduct of the missionaries in the South Sea Islands, and he expressed his fears that the inhabitants had only exchanged one abject superstition for another, and that no advance would be made in civilization under the usurped dominion of ignorant fanatics. I thought it but justice to remove from the mind of such a man his misapprehension of the character of the enlightened and devoted missionaries, who had made Christianity the precursor of a rapid civilization; and I told him of the cessation of human sacrifices and infanticide, the institution of marriage, the appointment of magistrates by the voice of the people, the adoption of a simple code of

laws—such as he himself might have recommended, the establishment of a printing press, the encouragement of agriculture, and the introduction of commerce and the useful arts. He was exceedingly interested with the detail, and learning that my authority was Mr. Ellis's book, he called his secretary, a young gentleman whom he addressed with the affectionate kindness of a father, and requested him to purchase it for him in the morning. It was now half-past twelve, and I took my leave of the venerable old man, with a bundle of his books which he had presented to me, having first received a cordial invitation to visit him whenever I came to London. "My time," said he, "is but short, and I cannot have many opportunities of seeing you." I saw him only once again. The oil was fast wasting in the lamp which had burned so long and so brightly. He died on the day before the Reform Bill passed, and he knew that it was to pass.

Before my return home a "true bill" for libel was found against me, at our quarter sessions. I procured a copy of the indictment, and learned that I, "Archibald Prentice, late of Manchester, labourer," being a person of a wicked disposition, and instigated by the devil, had, with force and arms, printed, and caused to be printed, published, and caused to be published, certain false, scandalous, and malicious things, therein set forth, of and concerning one John Grimshaw, commonly called Capt. Grimshaw. What I had said was as true as holy writ, but, according to judge-made law, no doubt a libel. I had said he had been accustomed to give indecent toasts at public dinners, and everybody knew that he had. I resolved to deny the tenability of an indictment calling upon the jury, upon their oaths, without other evidence than proof of publication, to find that I was guilty of the malice and falsehood charged; but having some faint recollection of having seen something in print by Bentham upon the law of libel, I sent Dr. Bowring a copy of the indictment, begging him to lay it before his

illustrious friend, and to ask him what course I ought to pursue. In the course of a few days I received a pamphlet published by him in 1817, denying the tenability of such indictments. In a few days more he sent me an examination of the indictment, exposing its absurdities and falsehoods, and arguing that a jury could not, without perjury, find that to be false which was not proved to be false. I was of course delighted with having a corroboration of my opinion from such a quarter; and as it was not likely that I should find a lawyer bold enough to set the dicta of the courts at defiance, I determined to undertake my own defence. The trial came on at the Manchester quarter sessions, July 14th, and it became my turn to address the jury. I arose, not without some embarrassment, for it was a new scene to me, and there were fine and imprisonment, at the mercy of the court which I was defying, if I failed. But there was something in the novelty of the argument, and the plainness and earnestness with which it was offered, that strongly arrested the attention of the jury. In the indictment I had been called a labourer, and I said, in the words of Bentham: "Yes! a labourer I am in a certain sense, and I glory in so being. A labourer I am, and a labourer I have long been, in the field of parliamentary reform; and for my labour in that field, rather than from any injury to Captain Grimshaw, I suspect I owe my appearance before you to-day. A labourer I am, as you see and hear, in the vineyard of law reform—in the field of veracity and justice." I had been charged, in the indictment, with malice and falsehood, and I asked the jury: "Can you, upon your oaths, declare that to be false, of the falsehood of which you have not one particle of evidence, and the truth of which you shall hear me offer to prove? Will you, on your oaths, declare that I have published a FALSE libel? I know that you will not. I cannot imagine the possibility of there being, amongst twelve respectable and intelligent men, one who would upon his oath declare that to be false, of the falsehood of

which there is not only no evidence, but not the pretence of evidence, while of its truth evidence is tendered and refused." I went on to examine count after count of the indictment: "Count the fifth is the same as count the first and fourth, but with this very remarkable difference, that the word 'false' is omitted. True or false as the libel might prove, here is a trap laid for you to convict me. The indictment-drawing attorney has anticipated my objection, though the learned counsel has not. He has contemplated the possibility of an honest jury being unwilling to declare that to be false which, for anything he knew to the contrary, might be as true as holy writ. But 'vaulting cunning doth o'erleap itself.' The very leaving out of the charge of falsehood is an express acknowledgment that the charge itself is false. Here you have them demanding of you that you shall punish me for speaking the truth: and will you forget the ancient law of the land, and so confound the distinctions between right and wrong as to expose me to the same punishment for speaking the truth as would be awarded to me if I had been guilty of the most atrocious falsehoods." I asked the chairman, Mr. Norris, if I might be allowed to prove the truth of what I had asserted concerning Grimshaw.

"The CHAIRMAN.—Certainly not.

"Mr. PRENTICE.—I have witnesses in court to prove the whole of what I have asserted; but I am not allowed to call them. But my case is complete without them. A man who is charged with an offence in a court of justice is not called to prove the falsehood of the charge. It must be brought home to him by evidence. If there is not proof against him there is nothing for him to rebut, and the charge falls to the ground, as this must."

I went on to say that even had I charged Grimshaw with the utmost wickedness that human nature can reach: "even, in such a case, I should have been entitled to a verdict of not guilty, for you could not have subscribed to all that is contained in this indictment; and, as I said before, if a criminal escaped in consequence of your

sentence of acquittal, the fault would not lie with you, but with the blunderer who crammed his indictment with statements unsupported by proof." And thus I went on, for an hour, repeating, in a variety of forms, nearly the same things, and concluded by saying:—

"Gentlemen, I deny that I have written any libel on Captain Grimshaw that calls for punishment; but if I had, dare you, upon your oaths, declare it to be either a false or malicious libel, without one particle of proof either of falsehood or malice, and not only without proof, but in the face of my offer to prove the contrary? I speak boldly, gentlemen—you cannot. As *honest men* you cannot. As *Christians*, reverencing the sacred oath you have taken, YOU DARE NOT. I have not appealed to your passions, gentlemen, but I do appeal to your understandings, which are mocked by this indictment—and I do appeal to your consciences, which are insulted by this indictment, and I call upon you to regard your verdict not as a matter between the lawyers and you, but as matter between you and your GOD,—and to give such decision as you shall answer for in the great day of judgment, in that court where it will be in vain to plead *custom* as an excuse for the VIOLATION OF AN OATH."

The chairman of the sessions had the usual reply in such cases:—"The law says if any one personates or writes for publication, concerning any individual or individuals, that which has a tendency to bring any person into hatred or contempt, such writing or personation is a libel; whether the writer intended it should have that effect or not, still it is a libel, and, being so, the law *presumes* that it is false; and the *inference* is also that it is malicious, and the law *presumes* that it is both malicious and scandalous so to bring any one into contempt. A libel, having a tendency to excite to a breach of the peace, was *said* to be against the peace of the king; and it was a *customary thing*, therefore, to say it was done with force and arms."

Immediately after the chairman had concluded his charge, a little after seven o'clock in the evening, the trial having lasted two hours, the jury requested permission to retire for the purpose of considering their verdict; and after one

of the police-officers had been sworn in charge of them, they were conducted to the grand jury room, there to remain without food, fire, or candle, till they agreed upon their verdict. The court sat still for two hours without calling any other case. At nine o'clock there being no tidings of the jury, the chairman sent for them, and asked them if there was any probability of their soon coming to an agreement? The foreman very emphatically said they were not likely, and they were then sent again into their room, and the court was adjourned to Mr. Norris's house, where he said he would receive the verdict at any hour of the night. I remained at Mr. John Whyatt's, in Bridge-street, expecting, throughout the whole of the night, to be called on to accompany the jury to Mr. Norris's house; but hour after hour rolled on, and still the jury remained. At six in the morning we went to look up to the windows of the grand jury room where they were in durance, but still there was no indication of movement. The court opened at nine next morning, and still the jury were locked up. An appeal case was entered upon and concluded without any tidings from them. At a quarter to eleven, *fifteen hours and a half* from the time they had retired, Mr. Brandt rose, and said, that after the long period the jury had been locked up, he was willing to prevent their suffering any further confinement, and would consent to their being discharged if they were still unable to agree. The *Chairman*: "Do you consent to this arrangement, Mr. Prentice?" I said, "I do, most willingly. I have no desire to prolong their captivity." The jury were then called in, and on saying that they still were unable to agree, they were told of the arrangement, and discharged.

It was afterwards stated by some of the jurymen that TEN of their number decided on a verdict of "not guilty" in a few minutes after they retired. The foreman, they said, was for a verdict of guilty, and that another joined him, on condition that if the verdict were "guilty," it

should be accompanied by a declaration that the falsehood had not been proved. The TEN, however, were inflexible. One of them had laid himself down, at full length on the table. Another asked him, "Hast thou a bowster (bolster) there?" The reply was: "No, I have no bowster but the bowster of God's truth and justice, and I winno' bring in this man guilty." Another, who had lost his right arm in his youth, held up the other and said: "I will gnaw the flesh from the bones of this one arm before I find him guilty." They had all found the sensation of thirst very painfully, and when daylight came they looked out wishfully upon the Irwell flowing past, black as ink, thinking it was a great pity that so much good water should run to waste whilst they were so dry! Here are their names:—

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| George Jackson, foreman | Salford |
| William Dixon | Do. |
| Thomas Bainbridge | Do. |
| John Fletcher | Wuerdle and Wardle. |
| William Crossley | Todmorden. |
| William Scholfield | Do. |
| Robert Barker | Tottington. |
| Richard Howarth | Do. |
| Thomas Elton | Do. |
| John Wilde .. | Do. |
| Edmund Pickup | Do. |
| John Priestley | Do. |

Many of the London papers reported and commented upon the trial. The *Examiner* paid me the compliment of attributing, from internal evidence, but erroneously, a particular part of my speech to the pen of Bentham. Cobbett, who had been tried a week before, and escaped the conviction that was earnestly desired, expressed himself exultingly at this another triumph over the judge-made law of libel. I had written to Bentham, asking him to felicitate me on the result, and the following was his reply; which will be found also in Bowring's *Memoirs of the Jurist's Life*:—

"Queen's Square Place, Westminster, July 21st, 1831.

DEAR SIR,—Yes ; I do felicitate you ; I felicitate the honest and intelligent jurymen, I felicitate the country in general, I felicitate myself, on this your virtual acquittal. I say the country in general ; for further, much further than to the deliverance of one innocent man from the persecution under which he was suffering, do I look for the benefit capable of resulting from this event. It not only always has been, but will now be very extensively seen to be, in the power, not merely of any jury, but of any one man in any jury, to effect no inconsiderable progress in the career of law reform. For producing an effect so eminently desirable, a very few juries, and thence a very few individuals, one in each jury, will suffice. Choosing for the experiment those cases in which the acquittal, though of a person by whom the offence has really been committed, will be productive of least evil to the public (and many are the cases in which it would not be productive of any evil at all) ; making this choice, and declaring that the acquittal had no other cause than their determination not to join with the judges and their partners in iniquity, in the contamination of the public morals, by the utterance of such a tissue of solemn and pernicious falsehoods, it will be in the power of this small number of individuals to compel those on whom it depends to clear all instruments of accusation from the greater part of that mass of pickpocket lies and absurdities with which they have hitherto been loaded. This may a small number of the lovers of justice do ; and thus doing, they will thus pave the way for the establishment of that all-comprehensive plan of law reform to the organization of which nearer three-quarters than half a century of my life has been devoted. And here, sir, you have before you *my* ground for self-felicitation.

"The course which I am thus using my endeavours to recommend to jurymen is no other than that which I myself would take were I in their place. In former days it happened to me to be summoned to serve upon juries of both kinds, grand and special. Having received from nature the experienced faculty of remaining without food for several days without much inconvenience, it would have been in my power in the situation of jurymen to command the verdict ; and if so disposed, in the situation of member of a petty jury, special or common, to give or sell impunity for any crime at pleasure not to speak of the giving to one man the property, to any amount of any other. With what feelings and what views I figured to myself this power in some hands, I leave you to imagine. On the

particular occasions then in question, I saw no prospect of rendering to my country in a jury box service to so great an amount as it seemed to me I could render, and was actually rendering in my closet, and thence it was that the invitation never experienced my acceptance.

" 'Of a bad bargain make the best,' says one of our old *saws*, nor that the least instructive one. Under the rotten and anti-popular constitution, for the change of which into a sound and popular one all eyes are looking with such intense anxiety, the main use of juries, as *at present* constituted, is, in my view of the matter, the *veto* which the institution gives to the people upon laws—upon bad laws in general, and in particular upon all those in which the oligarchy by whom we are plundered and oppressed have a special sinister interest.

"On a cursory glance, it does not seem to me that you had reason to complain, either of the learned gentleman who led as counsel against you, or of the other learned gentleman who on this occasion officiated as judge. Thus the law *is*, says the judge; and in saying it, says what is but too true. Thus the law *is*—that is the spurious, *judge-made* law—substituted to legislature-made law and to parliament-made law, and in this consists the grievance.

"As to the learned counsel, 'Mischief is capable of being done,' says he, 'by taunting men with offences which they have really committed.' In this (though it would not come up to his purpose by warranting the jury to tell the lies in question) there is unquestionable truth, and it presents a real demand for regulation. Such regulation my penal code would accordingly give; but of judge-made law (if to the tissue of irregularities which have no words belonging to them the name of *law* must be misapplied), one of the evil properties is, that by it no *regulation* of anything can be made.

"It is with no small satisfaction and admiration that I have observed the ability with which you turned to account the materials with which I had the pleasure of furnishing you, and the important additions which you made to them.

"Dear sir, yours sincerely,

"JEREMY BENTHAM."

"Archibald Prentice, Esq., Manchester."

"P.S. My advice to jurymen is plain and unmisunderstandable, and nothing can be easier than to follow it. Examine the indictment, and if in any part there be any assertion that is either notoriously false or not proved to be true, do not join in declaring it to be true, but say 'Not Guilty.' "

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DELEGATE PARLIAMENT.

FOR once, there was an "appeal to the country;" all other so-named appeals, in our modern history, had been to the rotten boroughs and the close counties. The popular will bore almost universal sway. The election cry was "The bill, the whole bill, and nothing but the bill"—the meaning of the latter condition being "nothing *less* than the bill." The conviction had spread amongst the enemies of reform that, if there was not change to the extent promised, reform to a much greater extent would be imperatively demanded. They yielded to what seemed to be an inevitable necessity; and the curious spectacle was exhibited of rotten boroughs sending delegates to vote for their own disfranchisement. A stand was made in the universities, and in boroughs where the tory aristocracy had unlimited power; but wherever there was more than a mere shadow of representation, men were elected whose sole pledge was that they should pass the bill. There was to be a convention of 1831, as there had been a convention in 1688—a convention, not to alter the succession to the throne, but to secure the representative rights of the people—not by a perfect and final measure, but by one containing the elements that would produce further and more theoretically perfect reforms, without the necessity of further fierce agitation. The counties generally sent pledged delegates. In Lancashire no tory dared to offer himself to the electors, and Mr. Stanley (now Lord Stanley) and Mr. Heywood, of Manchester (now Sir Benjamin Heywood), were elected by acclamation.

The delegate parliament met on the 24th of June; on the 25th the Reform Bill was again introduced, on the 26th

it was read a first time, and on the 4th of July the second reading was moved. A three days' debate followed, and on the division ministers had a majority of one hundred and thirty-six. Long and tedious delay took place in committee, the tories yielding only inch by inch, taking up fresh ground whenever driven from their position, and it was not until the 22nd of September that the bill passed the lower house; the country looking on quietly and confident as to the result, but prepared for instant action should any unforeseen obstruction arise. Many meetings, however, took place to prove to the House of Lords that there was no relaxation in the desire for fair representation.

On that 22nd of September a meeting was held in the Town Hall, Manchester, Mr. James Burt, the boroughreeve, in the chair. Mr. Richard Potter took the lead. "It had been said that the ardour for reform had abated, and this was one reason for holding the meeting, that it might be shown that the people were still animated with the same determined resolution which had been manifested throughout the long-protracted contest." Mr. M. Philips followed, and said, that misrepresentations of the state of public opinion might be expected from men whose selfish interests or whose want of principle prompted them to advocate the continuance of a system under which they had themselves fattened on the public plunder. A somewhat turbulent person, named Ashmore, a weaver—one of a class of men who, whether they were honest or not, were doing the work of the obstructives as earnestly as if they had been well paid for it—here rose and asserted that there had been a great alteration in public opinion about the bill, which, however, bad as it was, he would accept as a stepping-stone for more. A working man, named Thomas Johnson, followed, who declared his conviction that the bill would be advantageous to the working classes, for which declaration he was hissed by Ashmore's small party. Mr. Thomas Heywood said that there was no evidence to show that the

reformers of May and June were not reformers in September, and expressed his aversion to the corn-law, to repeal which would be the first duty of a reformed parliament. Mr. John Shuttleworth then addressed the meeting in a most effective speech, in which he asserted that it was an imperative and most solemn duty, on the part of the minister, by advising an exercise of the king's prerogative, and by the creation of the necessary number of peers, how large soever that number might be, to carry the measure safely through the House of Lords. Mr. Jeremiah Lloyd said that the delay in forwarding the bill had had one good effect—it had shown that the demand for it was not from temporary excitement, but enduring conviction. Mr. R. H. Greg expressed his conviction that the lords would pass the bill, for they must be aware that its rejection would be attended with most disastrous consequences. Mr. James Whittle and Mr. Thomas Harbottle supported the petition that had been proposed. Mr. J. C. Dyer, in a short and pithy speech, denied the right of the lords to interfere in the constitution of the other house, which ought to represent the people. Mr. G. Humphreys, in a first appearance before the public, ably asserted the justice of the measure about to be submitted to the House of Lords. Mr. G. Hadfield characterized the bill as a confirmation of the revolution of 1688, by the admission of the people to the power intended for them, but which they did not obtain, from the want, at that time, of a knowledge of the principles of representation. After short speeches from Mr. G. H. Winder, Mr. E. Baxter, Mr. J. C. Walker, Mr. Thomas Potter, and myself, the meeting closed with three tremendous cheers for reform. A numerous and equally enthusiastic meeting was held in Salford on the following week.

The second reading of the Reform Bill was moved in the House of Lords on the 3rd of October. At a late hour Lord Wharncliffe moved an amendment, "that the bill be read a second time that day six months," and the debate

was adjourned till next day, and from day to day, until, at four o'clock in the morning of the 7th, Earl Grey rose to reply. He concluded his address by saying: "If your lordships throw out the bill, it will rest with myself and my conscience how I shall shape my future conduct. But I will not abandon the helm of affairs so long as I can be useful to my king or my country." On the anxiously-expected division there appeared, contents 158, non-contents 199, being a majority of forty-one against the bill, twenty-one of the number being contributed by the bench of bishops. To soften the disappointment to the country—perhaps to avoid the consequences to themselves—many of the opponents of the bill expressed their conviction that the time was come when some reform—"safe" and "gradual"—ought to take place; and the Archbishop of Canterbury, on behalf of himself and the right reverend bench, said, "he was so thoroughly sensible that *some* reform was necessary, that to a *temperate* and *safe* reform he would offer no objections. He could not help indulging a hope that the discussions of that evening would lead to the introduction of such a measure as would ensure the union of men of all parties." There was no faith in such professions—no faith in reform from such sources. The conviction had been growing up, during the long-protracted discussions, that the measure, instead of going too far, had not gone far enough; and a new and fiercer agitation was commenced:

"The country pours amain,
The spirit of our ancestors is up,—
The spirit of the free! And with a voice
That breathes success, they all demand reform."

Early on the morning of Monday the 10th, it was generally known throughout Manchester that active measures were in operation for convening a public meeting, and in the course of the day a notice from the municipal authorities, in compliance with a requisition signed by upwards of four hundred merchants, and other inhabitants, was

issued, inviting the inhabitants to assemble on Wednesday, in the Riding School, Lower Mosley-street, "to consider the propriety of presenting a dutiful and loyal address to his majesty, at this alarming crisis, for the purpose of assuring him of their devotion to his person, and of their unshaken determination to give to his majesty, and his present government, all the support in their power; and also of imploring his majesty to take such decisive constitutional proceedings as shall counteract the pernicious consequences which may result from the rejection of the Reform Bill by the House of Lords, secure the passing of that important measure into a law, and thus preserve the peace, and secure the future welfare of the country." At the hour appointed the street was filled with people who, the moment the door was opened, completely filled the place, to the number of four thousand, leaving thousands more outside clamouring for adjournment. A vain attempt was made to proceed with business, but the cries for adjournment were overpowering. At length it was agreed that the meeting should be held in Camp Field, to which the whole assemblage proceeded, swelling as it went, until the number congregated amounted to at least a hundred thousand, exceeding, by forty thousand, the number met on St. Peter's Field on the 16th of August, 1819. The boroughreeve having declined presiding at an open-air meeting, Mr. Thomas Potter, now beginning to take that active part in public business which he pursued during the remainder of his most useful life, was called to the chair and received with tremendous cheers. He briefly addressed the meeting, and called on the brother of the county member, to move the first resolution. Mr. Heywood spoke in a low tone of voice, with some hesitation, and was badly heard; and it became obvious that there would be a demand for resolutions more in accordance with the fierce temper of the disappointed multitude than those which were to be proposed. Mr. Shuttleworth's better voice and more

assured tone made him well heard over the greater part of the meeting, and much of what he said was enthusiastically cheered, but his allusion to the necessity of creating an additional number of peers was met by cries of "no more peers—we've had enough of them." A young man of the name of Richardson moved an amendment to the effect, that the king should be addressed to issue writs to populous places, to withhold them from decayed and rotten boroughs, and to create no new peers, but to take such other constitutional measures as should secure the passing of a bill on the principles of universal suffrage, annual parliaments, and vote by ballot. A scene of extraordinary excitement followed. Mr. Shuttleworth and Mr. J. C. Dyer in vain attempted to show the propriety of adopting the resolutions proposed. I tried to show that a slight alteration of the amendment might secure unanimity, but was met with overpowering cries of "Don't humbug us." Mr. Humphreys begged the meeting to support the men who were fighting their battles in parliament, and the reply was: "We'll fight our battle ourselves." The utmost confusion prevailed, but on the amendment being put and declared to be carried, tremendous shouts rent the air, and thanks being unanimously voted to the chairman, the enormous assemblage peaceably dispersed. My comments on this meeting were:—

"The congregation of one hundred thousand of the inhabitants of Manchester was a proof of the interest which the public feel on the fate of the Reform Bill, and ought, with similar manifestations throughout the country, to convince the lords of the majority that the demand for reform is one which, instead of subsiding experiences fearful increase by opposition. The Tories need not lay the flattering unction to their souls that the people will accept their as-little-as-needs-be scheme of reform, if they should succeed in throwing out the present bill. If that be ultimately thrown out, they may depend upon it that the people will be unanimous in demanding one with a broader extension of suffrage, and with complete protection to the voter. The meeting, in consequence of the fury of a few foolish and mis-

guided men, was not effective as an expression of deliberate opinion, but it was most instructive as to the consequences of a branch of the legislature, whose hereditary sway is only tolerated, throwing itself as an obstacle in the way of the people's will."

The irritated feelings of the people found more alarming expression in other parts of the country. On the 10th, 11th, and 12th October much alarm was occasioned by the assemblage of tumultuous crowds; the Duke of Wellington was insulted on his way to the House of Lords; the Marquis of Londonderry was attacked and stones thrown at him, one of which struck him on the temple; and many of the most obnoxious amongst the nobility had their windows knocked in and broken. When the intelligence of the rejection of the bill reached Derby, a great crowd assembled, broke open the town jail and liberated the prisoners. The county jail was also attacked but successfully defended. Mr. Haden, a respectable inhabitant of the town, was struck with a stone, which caused his death. At Nottingham the disturbances were still more serious, and the rioting ended, after an attack upon Colwick Hall, the seat of J. Musters, Esq., whose lady died of the fright occasioned, by the destruction by fire of the beautiful castle,—standing unroofed till the present day, a monument of blind fury,—the property of the Duke of Newcastle, who had become unpopular, and had given a great impulse to reform, by his insolent declaration relative to his dependant voters at Newark, that "he had a right to do what he liked with his own." On the 12th, Earl Grey informed the deputies from various parishes of the metropolis that it would be absurd to think of again proposing Lord John Russell's bill, but they might be assured that the ministers would support no bill that would not secure to the people their constitutional rights. On the 26th parliament was prorogued by the king, who intimated the necessity of resuming, in the ensuing session, the subject of a constitutional reform. This did not, however, put an end to the disturbances, of which

many, caring nothing about reform, joined for the sake of plunder. On the 29th Bristol became the scene of frightful and disgracing excesses on the public entrance of Sir Charles Wetherall, recorder for the city, whose opposition to the Reform Bill, in the House of Commons, had been characterised by the bitterest and most unmeasured vituperation of all who promoted it. "The whole of Bristol," says Mr. Wade, "was on the verge of destruction; the mansion-house, custom-house, excise-office, and bishop's palace were plundered and set on fire; the toll-gates pulled down; the prisons burst open with sledge hammers, and their inmates, criminals and debtors, set at liberty amidst the exulting shouts of the populace. During the whole of the Sunday the mob were the unresisted masters of the city. Forty-two offices, dwelling-houses, and warehouses, were completely destroyed, exclusive of public buildings. The loss of property was estimated at half a million. The number of rioters killed, wounded, or otherwise injured, were 110. Of about fourteen or sixteen who lost their lives, three died from the shots or sword-cuts of the military; the rest were mostly the victims of excessive drinking, in the rifled cellars and warehouses, which produced either apoplexy on the spot, or disabled them from escaping from the flames that they had themselves kindled." I have spoken of the functions of the Manchester Political Union as being more to direct and restrain than to urge—urging not being required when the association was formed. The Bristol Union had not been so effective in preventing outrages, but when they had occurred, it was very influential in restoring peace. In my paper of the 5th of November, I said:—

Lamentable and disgraceful riots, attended with serious loss of life and immense destruction of property, have taken place at Bristol. It is impossible to read the frightful details without seeing the perilous condition of a country in which the mass of the people, having no voice in the choice of representatives whose enactments they are

called upon to obey, nor in the choice of the magistrates who administer those laws, have no respect for the authorities appointed for the conservation of the peace. The magistrates, knowing that they had no one feeling in common with the people, seem to have been completely paralyzed; and the mob, seeing their imbecility, seemed to have proceeded from one act of violence to another, till, maddened by unexpected success, like the tiger which has tasted blood, they recklessly destroyed all before them, counting life and property as nothing. Is it possible that such horrible excesses could have been committed in any country where the people, having the enactment of their own laws and the formation of their own institutions, could say, "They are of our own making—we will enforce them; they are of our own creation—we will support them?" If, instead of a tory corporation, known for ages as adverse to popular rights, Bristol had been governed by magistrates appointed by the people, the riot would have been quelled in an hour or two. The application of that corporation, after three days' fire and carnage, to the Political Union, is pregnant with instruction. It was an acknowledgement that the peace could be restored only by authorities appointed by the people. The correspondent of the *Morning Herald* says: "The city may be said to be under the protection of the Political Union, to whom the magistrates were constrained to appeal in the dreadful emergency, and the firmness and patriotism displayed by the reformers merit every praise. Mr. Herepath, the vice-president of the Bristol Political Union, was vested by the magistrates with an authority similar to that of the under-sheriff. He was requested to assemble the members of the union—a course which, it should be remembered, the vice-president had already determined on; and, armed with the power conferred on them by the magistrates, the reformers applied themselves, in the most praiseworthy and successful manner, in the restoration of order." "It is impossible," says the *Bristol Mercury* of Tuesday, "to speak of the laudable conduct as we could have wished, displayed throughout the night by the members of the Political Union, acting in conjunction with the parochial authorities. The firmness and patriotism they have displayed on the present emergency entitle them not only to the esteem of their fellow-citizens, but to the gratitude of the whole country. A stronger contrast can scarcely be conceived than the good order of the last evening presented to the uproar and confusion of Sunday night. Under their protection we may now say that confidence is restored, though the city still bears the appearance of gloom, very few shops

being open and business still being in a manner suspended." The contrast of the good order of Tuesday morning with the uproar of Sunday evening is the contrast of an authority appointed by the people with one in whose appointment they have no choice. Mr. Herepath was the legitimate magistrate, the corporation the usurpers. Under them, all was tumult and confusion; under him, was good order and confidence. Under their direction, the military only added to the irritation; under his direction, they were hailed as the restorers of peace. The city abandoned to destruction, the reformers and the soldiery restored tranquillity.

Great efforts having been made to create disunion amongst the reformers, the council of the Manchester Political Union met on Wednesday, the 9th November, and agreed to a series of resolutions, two of which are subjoined:—

"That the members of this council, associated during the Wellington administration for the purpose of promoting parliamentary reform on the broadest basis, having since the introduction of the Reform Bill given it their warmest support, as a great improvement upon the present corrupt and impoverishing system, though it fell far short of their ideas of theoretic excellence, as every reform will, in which exclusion is not itself excluded, were grieved and alarmed at its rejection; and especially when it was reported, that, on being re-introduced, it would be deprived of some of its best principles, in order to render it more acceptable to an aristocracy adverse to any extension of the suffrage.

"That while the members of this council feel it their duty to invite all reformers to unite with them in one call for the adoption of the ancient constitutional principle of suffrage, for the frequent exercise of the elective right, and for the protection to the voter from all undue influences; and though they think all these points are necessary to a thorough reform, and though they will continue to demand them as their right, they feel that it is a duty they owe to themselves to declare, that they will not oppose themselves to any such scheme of reform, which, though short of their own ideas of perfection, shall effect a real amendment upon the present corrupt system, and tend to lessen the evils introduced by a long train of misgovernment, while, by showing that their fears of the consequences of innovation are groundless, it may lead the way to the peaceable adoption of measures which shall restore to the whole people their long-lost rights,

and sweep away every abuse in the state, the laws, and the church. Their principle is to ADVANCE—to the extreme point as speedily as possible—but at all events, to ADVANCE."

Such was the generous waiving of present demands, considered just and reasonable, which the reformers conceded to the whig administration, believing that when a beginning had been made, and made safely, they would acknowledge that principle of progression; and if they did not themselves urge on other reforms, would at least leave the shortening the duration of parliaments, the adoption of the ballot, and the extension of the suffrage, as open questions. It was an ungenerous return to declare the doctrine of finality—still more ungenerous to act upon it when the declaration of finality was denied.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE REFORM BILL PASSED.

THE new parliament assembled on the 6th December, 1831. There was faith that reform would be carried, because there was the determination that it should be carried. The obstructives might appear in unexpected strength, the administration might falter in its course, and the king might yield to unseen and mischievous influenees ; but the people were determined to have reform, peaceably if they could, but to have it. Every thinking person saw that there was to be either reform or revolution, and felt convinced that the one would be yielded rather than that the risk of the other should be incurred. "There was something unusually solemn," says Miss Martineau, "in that meeting of parliament on the 6th December." It was certainly a season of much solemnity, for great issues were to be tried, but it was one in which hope greatly preponderated over fear. The result was not watched with the anxiety with which we wait the verdict of a jury, shut up until they agree. The country had already pronounced the verdict, and parliament was assembled only to put it upon record.

Lord John Russell brought forward his new bill, in the House of Commons, on the 12th December. On Friday, the 16th, the second reading was moved, and the debate did not come to a conclusion until Sunday morning, the 18th, when the majority was 162 in a house of 486. An adjournment took place till after the Christmas holidays, and the contest was resumed on the 17th January, 1832. The house went into committee on the 20th, and every possible device to obstruct and to delay having been resorted

to, it was not until the 19th of March that the third reading was moved. On the 22nd the motion was carried, 355 voting for and 239 against it.

A more doubtful contest was to take place in the House of Lords. They had defeated the former bill, and it was known that, although many converts had been made, there was still a majority of obstructives there; yet few would believe that they would risk the existence of their own order by the positive rejection of the bill, and the only fear was as to its possible mutilation. The talk amongst the people was, that if the lords would not permit the commons to be reformed, their lordships' own house should be reformed—or abolished. On the 26th March the bill was introduced there and read a first time. On the 5th April, Earl Grey moved the second reading, and a four days' debate took place, ending with a division which gave 184 votes for and 175 against the bill. It became obvious that the measure would either be mutilated or lost in committee unless peers were created for the emergency. Numerous large meetings were held, intended to strengthen the hands of ministers if they stood firm to the integrity of the bill; there was the expression of a determined resolution, without any great amount of excitement; there was still the belief that means would be found to force the measure through the obstructive house. The Easter holidays being over, the House of Lords met on Monday, the 7th May, and resolved itself into a committee upon the bill. Lord Lyndhurst moved that the disfranchising should be postponed until after the consideration of the enfranchising clauses. The motion was carried by a majority of 35. It was now seen that the intention was, regardless of consequences, either to mutilate or destroy the bill. On Wednesday, ministers finding that the king was not disposed to use the only means left to influence the lords, resigned office, and the Duke of Wellington was sent for. The people rose, almost as one man, with the manifestation of

one determined will. A crisis was come. Reform had been refused, and the other alternative was forced on every one's consideration. It was understood that the military had received their instructions. Alexander Somerville, in his "Autobiography of a Working Man," says that "the Scots Greys at Birmingham had orders to rough-sharpen their swords, that they might inflict a ragged wound;" but there were rumours also that the soldiers would not act against the people. If the king did not exercise his constitutional prerogative to ensure the passing of a measure so imperatively demanded a revolution must ensue. Men pondered whether it would be a three days' contest, as in France, or a protracted and bloody civil war.

The intelligence that ministers had resigned reached Manchester soon after seven o'clock in the morning of Thursday. It was circulated with inconceivable rapidity, and the sensation it created was beyond description. Business was at once suspended. Purchasers for the home market, fearing insurrection, would buy no more. Foreigners, dreading the effect upon the foreign policy of this country that would be the result of a tory administration being restored, with all its leanings in favour of continental despotism, countermanded their orders. The shopkeepers left their places of business, and ran about asking, "what is to be done now?" The working classes, in every district of the town, gathered into little knots, and, with curses both loud and deep, expressed their hatred of the faction whose intrigues had prevailed over the voice of twenty-four millions of people. There had been a committee appointed at the September reform meeting in Manchester, and it had resolved to sit every day at the Town Hall till the bill was safely passed through the House of Lords. Here, then, merchants, manufacturers, and others simultaneously assembled, until, with that committee, they formed a highly respectable and numerous public meeting. Mr. John Shuttleworth was called to the

chair, and the following petition, prepared by Mr. Absalom Watkin, was read amidst loud and enthusiastic cheers :—

“TO THE HONOURABLE THE COMMONS, &c.,

“The Petition of the undersigned Inhabitants, &c.,

“Sheweth,—That your petitioners have heard, with feelings that it is impossible to describe, that the Reform Bill has again been virtually lost in the House of Lords, and that Earl Grey and his administration have, in consequence, been compelled to withdraw from his majesty’s councils ;—that your petitioners, considering that the plan of reform which has been defeated was a measure which merely restored to the people a right to which they were always entitled by the constitution, and of which they have been too long defrauded by a faction ; considering also that the bill had been twice passed by your honourable house, and was earnestly desired by the people ; and, moreover, that it is a measure which legally and honestly can affect the people and their representatives only ;—are at a loss to find words to express their indignation at being denied their birthright, by the manœuvres of a small number of interested individuals. That your petitioners being thus situated, have recourse to your honourable house as the constituted organ of their wishes, and their established defence against injustice and arbitrary rule, and do pray your honourable house that you will assert your own collective dignity, and the indefeasible rights of your fellow subjects by determined adherence to the bill, and by *refusing to vote any supplies* until a measure essential to the happiness of the people and the safety of the throne shall be carried into a law.”

The petition was agreed to, without a dissenting voice, and it was resolved that it should be carried to London that same evening, by a deputation consisting of Mr. Richard Potter, Mr. John Fielden, and Mr. Shuttleworth. The writing of the petition was not concluded till one o’clock, and it was two before placards could be got out, stating where it would lie for signature, and nearly three before all the sheets were distributed to the appointed places ; but at six o’clock the signatures amounted to TWENTY-FOUR THOUSAND. The deputation then started in a chaise and four for London ; thousands of persons enthusiastically cheering them as they drove off. As they

did not change horses at Stockport, the inhabitants were not aware of the object of their journey, but at Macclesfield a number of people collected, and with loud cheers testified their gratification at the promptitude which had been displayed at Manchester. At Leek, in consequence of some delay in changing horses, the business of the deputation got known, and in a few minutes almost the whole population were in the streets. A short account of the meeting was distributed amongst them, and also the petition to the commons. The crowd was so dense, that the carriage could not proceed for some time; the cheering of the people was loud and continued, and numbers pressed forward to shake hands with the gentlemen of the deputation. Although it was midnight when they passed through Derby, several persons soon collected, and expressed their satisfaction that Manchester had set so good an example. Loughbrough and Leicester were passed through in the dead of the night; but Mr. Potter put some of the resolutions in the post, directed for his friends there. The deputation reached Northampton about five in the morning; the object of their journey soon spread, and the inhabitants, on hearing the shouts of the people, repaired to their windows, eagerly inquiring what was the matter, and on being told, waved their hands and wished success to the mission. In the small towns from Northampton to London, the gentlemen were everywhere welcomed with the utmost enthusiasm. They reached Palace Yard a little after eleven, having performed the journey in SEVENTEEN HOURS, a wonderful feat in those days, though at several of the towns they passed through in the night they had to wait generally a quarter of an hour, and lost, at least, an hour and a half in this way. At every town and village they distributed a short account of the meeting, and the petition; and as they approached London, copies of the petition were distributed to the passengers of the numerous coaches they met, so that in the course of

that day intelligence of the Manchester meeting would be spread throughout the greater part of the kingdom. Immediately on the deputation reaching London, they repaired to Westminster Hall and the committee rooms, and they soon found John Wood, Esq., the patriotic member for Preston, who instantly put his own name and Mr. Heywood's on the speaker's list, to obtain precedence in the presentation of the petition, and it was owing to this prompt proceeding that the petition was presented that very night. Mr. Wood, amidst the cheers of the whole house, made a most energetic and well-timed speech. After securing the presentation of the petition, the deputation called on Mr. Heywood, Joseph Hume, Daniel O'Connell, Col. Evans, Mr. Tomes, and several other friends of reform, requesting them to support the prayer of the petition, and were received most cordially. .

The Manchester petition was the very first which was presented praying the House of Commons to *stop the supplies until reform and a redress of grievances were obtained*. There being no house on Saturday, its presentation on Friday was most opportune, for the example was eagerly followed by all parts of the kingdom. On Saturday and Sunday the petition was the general subject of conversation in London. On Saturday the deputation were engaged in calling on several members of both houses, to give them personal assurances that not only was there no abatement in the desire for reform, but that the probability of the formation of a ministry adverse to it had roused a spirit which would render it impossible for any such administration to conduct the affairs of government.

The extemporaneous meeting on the Thursday had been held at an hour of the day when the working classes had not the opportunity of attending. It was desirable that they should have their share in the demonstration, not to increase the excitement, but that it might be regulated and kept within constitutional bounds. There was no need

to urge onwards ; more need was there to restrain, or at least to keep in the right and peaceful direction a feeling smarting under the universal conviction of a great wrong and insult having been offered to the nation. It was felt that a thoroughly public expression of opinion was the legitimate and safe course. A meeting was appointed to be held on the following Monday, on St. Peter's Field, the scene of former meetings when to ask for reform was a crime—to be the scene thereafter, in an enormous hall erected for the express purpose, of a long series of crowded meetings to agitate for that measure of free-trade which ought to have been the very first result of the Reform Bill. The area was now limited to 8,000 square yards, on which were congregated 40,000 persons of all ranks and conditions—not one-third women and children as on the 16th August, 1819, but all *men*, determined men. Mr. Charles James Stanley Walker, son of Thomas Walker, whose trial, in 1794, has been given in the commencement of this volume,—“honoured son of an honoured sire,” as one of the speakers designated him,—was called to the chair. The venerable Robert Philips, of Park, still holding the principles he had supported in 1792, moved the first resolution, “That this meeting has heard of the virtual loss of the Reform Bill in the House of Lords, and the consequent resignation of Earl Grey and his colleagues, with such sentiments as it becomes Englishmen to entertain when their best interests are basely sacrificed to the selfish views of a faction.” Mr. Philips's son-in-law, Mr. Robert Hyde Greg, seconded the motion. Alluding to the former meeting, which he had attended, he said :—

“He had flattered himself that the next time he had the pleasure of addressing his fellow-countrymen, it would have been for the purpose of congratulating them and the country on the victorious consummation of their struggle in having shaken off the burthen which had so long pressed them down—that incubus and nightmare, the boroughmongering faction. (Great applause.) But the prize, it seemed, was too great and valuable to be obtained on such easy terms.

After eighteen months of anxiety—after the heavy expense which the country has incurred by the general election—after the sufferings of the people, from the sickness of the heart from hope deferred—it seemed that the nation was again called upon to fight the battle of reform. (Applause.) The boroughmongers were determined, it seemed, to make a desperate struggle to retain their ill-gotten wealth and misused influence, but their groans and heavings were those of dying men. (Cheers.) But as they had thrown down the gauntlet, let it be taken up by the nation (long continued cheers)—and God defend the right.” (Renewed and enthusiastic applause.)

Mr. Joseph Johnson, who had endured a year's imprisonment for having appeared on the hustings on that very spot thirteen years before, moved the next resolution. “That this meeting, satisfied that the ministerial plan of reform was no more than a partial restoration to the people of a constitutional right of which they have been too long unjustly deprived, and well knowing that no part of the bill could, directly or indirectly, interfere with any legal or honest possession or privilege of that body by which it has been defeated, is unable to find language sufficiently strong to express the indignation with which it has witnessed this second refusal of an acknowledged right.” At the conclusion of his speech, Mr. Johnson said, that “if the people were satisfied to try the bill; if they were satisfied to give up a portion of their rights for the purpose of trying how the measure would work”—(here he was interrupted by loud cries of, “We are not satisfied; we want the whole.”) The speaker resumed: “I am for the whole; but let us get this bill if we can; and if it does not work well, let us go for the whole of our rights.” Mr. Thomas Potter, now and henceforward to take a generous and most influential part in public affairs, in seconding the motion, said it was impossible for him to find words sufficiently strong to express his indignation of the conduct of the House of Lords in rejecting the Reform Bill. Mr. Johnson's speech, and the resolution he had read, had been very indistinctly heard, and there were strong symptoms that the resolution had

been misunderstood, as committing the meeting to the bill as a perfect measure, instead of being accepted only as an instalment. I saw the danger of a division, which would have been to strengthen the resisting faction, and begged leave to read the resolution again, which I did loudly, slowly, and emphatically, so as to be heard by everybody in the meeting, to show that it referred to only a *partial* restoration of the people's rights. In the course of my address, designed to show that nothing but constitutional means should be used, and that physical force should not be resorted to until the very last extremity, I said :—

“The object of the present meeting was to obtain support to the patriots who were now fighting their battle in the House of Commons; and he hoped reformers, one and all, would put aside all minor differences, and unanimously agree in one object, namely, the stopping of the supplies. (Cheers.) If they did not obtain their wish by that course, there were other means, namely, that having raised their hands here in support of the resolutions to obtain their rights, then—*after all constitutional means had failed*—then it would be time to hold up their hands with something in them. (Tremendous cheers, which lasted some minutes.) He had always counselled peaceable and quiet measures, and he knew that he had sometimes rendered himself unpopular by it, when indignation hurried men into rash thoughts; but though he had always advised quiet measures, he knew what measures to propose after all these had failed. (Cheers.) * * He concluded by begging the reformers of Manchester to sink all little differences of opinion, and to seek the attainment of their purpose by peaceable and constitutional means. It might be that there were some present that day who did not go so far as himself, and others did; but the meeting should bear in mind, that in the event of an attempt to form a Polignac administration, the gentlemen who had framed the resolutions, moderate as they might seem to be, might in a few days be suffering within the walls of a prison. These were times to try men, but he hoped that the meeting would follow moderate counsels, although at the same time they ought to be ready and determined to struggle for their rights.” (Loud cheers.)

The dissatisfaction expressed by a portion of the meeting was now removed, and Mr. Elijah Dixon, one of the impri-

soned of 1817, and a working man named Thomas Johnson having expressed their approval of the resolution, it was put and carried unanimously, followed by three hearty cheers. Mr. William Harvey moved the next resolution: "That this meeting concur entirely with the petition that has already been sent from Manchester to the House of Commons on this subject, and does hereby solemnly call upon that house to adhere, with steadfast and unyielding determination, to the bill; and, above all, *to vote no supplies* whatever, until the bill, or a measure in every particular, at least, as favourable to the rights of the people, shall have passed into a law." True to his temperance principles, Mr. Harvey said they could not legally pass a resolution that they would pay no more taxes, but they could resolve amongst themselves not to consume spirits, malt, tobacco, and other unnecessary articles that contributed heavily to the revenue. Mr. James Whittle seconded the resolution, and it was carried unanimously, as was the petition, which was directed to be signed by the chairman. A cordial vote of thanks to the chairman having been passed, he said he had always been a reformer,—he was born a reformer,—and, if it pleased God, he would die a reformer. He was confident there was such a moral force in the country as would render an appeal to physical force unnecessary.

Another meeting was held in the adjoining town of Salford, which, under the bill then in jeopardy, was to have a separate member. Mr. William Hill, the boroughreeve, presided. The speakers were Mr. Hill, Mr. John Smith, Mr. Joseph Brotherton (to whose exertions was mainly owing the inclusion of the town in the list of boroughs to be enfranchised), Mr. Holland Hoole, Mr. Mark Philips, following the example of his venerable father, Mr. Heron, Mr. Thomas Hopkins, and Mr. Ormerod. One was also held in Chorlton-upon-Medlock, then called Chorlton Row, which was becoming a very populous township. Mr. Joseph Wood, the senior constable, was in the chair, and

the meeting was addressed by Mr. James Wood, Mr. Henry, Mr. Samuel Fletcher, Mr. Burdekin, Mr. Thomas Wheeler, Mr. Westhead, Mr. Kershaw, and myself. Similar demonstrations were made in the many large manufacturing towns which surround Manchester.

On Monday, the 7th of May, there was a congregation of the political unions at Birmingham, composing the largest meeting ever held in Great Britain. The Bromsgrove union, which arrived late on the field, was greeted with the Union Hymn, ending :—

“ God is our guide! No swords we draw,
We kindle not war's battle fires ;
By union, justice, reason, law,
We claim the birthright of our sires.
We raise the watchword Liberty !
We will, we will, we will be free.”

“ Before the echoes of the hymn had well died away,” says Miss Martineau, “ before the tears were well dried which the plighting of faith had brought upon many cheeks, the lords in London had decided, by a majority of thirty-five, against the disfranchising clauses.” Birmingham, after that pause of a day, again took the lead, and the unions were everywhere at work. The Common Council of London petitioned parliament to refuse the supplies, and appointed a committee to sit daily till the bill should be secured. Throughout the kingdom men speculated on the point whether the military would join with or take part against the people ; but none swerved from the determination, let the military act as they would, that the bill should pass un-mutilated—in its full integrity. There was a TEN DAYS' agitation as fearful to the obstructives in our kingdom as the THREE DAYS of France were to Charles X and his Polignae administration.

On Tuesday, the 15th of May, Lord Grey in the House of Lords, and Lord Althorp in the House of Commons, announced that communications had been renewed between

the sovereign and themselves which rendered it expedient to adjourn till Thursday. It was known that ministers would not have resumed office unless they were assured that they should have the sovereign's aid in passing the bill. "The words were scarcely uttered," says Miss Martineau, in her interesting history of the period, "before there was a rush from the houses to spread the tidings. There was no electric telegraph then, but the news flew as if by electric agency. By breakfast-time next morning placards were up in the streets of Birmingham, and presently the people thronged to Newhall Hill, after bringing Mr. Attwood into the town. As by an impulse of the moment, a minister present asked to offer thanksgiving, and that prayer—that devout expression of gratitude for their bloodless victory, and their privileges as exulting freemen, was felt by the throng to be a fitting sequel to their last week's solemn vow." On the 7th of June the Reform Bill became law.

In the interval, Manchester, about to be enfranchised, was already looking out for representatives, and it became obvious that some who had come into the field only when victory was of certain achievement, would seek honourable reward for their late exertions. One defect of the Reform Bill was now very obvious. In my paper of the 2nd of June I said:—

"Regarding the Reform Bill as now beyond danger, and expecting that in another week we shall be enabled to announce that it has become the law of the land, our minds are naturally directed to the consideration of what persons will be fit and proper representatives of the new constituency; and the first thing that strikes us is, the necessity of the bill being accompanied by another, of some half-dozen lines, to REPEAL THE SEPTENNIAL ACT, or that a positive pledge should be required from each candidate that he will relinquish his seat at the end of a term of not longer than three years. Almost every one who is to have a vote has felt the difficulty of making a choice of men upon whom a thorough dependence can be placed that they will ably and earnestly labour for these PRACTICAL RE-

FORMS of which the bill is only the precursor; and the difficulty assumes a formidable shape, when it is considered that *an error in the selection is irremediable for seven years!* We are of opinion that circumstances will produce right opinions, and the vigour of mind necessary to enforce them, but we fear that they will not produce this effect in time for the elections. It is impossible to look round us and see men who have no other claims to a seat than the merit of having, at the eleventh hour, and when the passing of the reform bill was obviously inevitable, given it their support, and to know that such to be suspected reformation is by many regarded as a reason for selection, without feelings of almost dismay at the possibility of such an exercise of the suffrage, as shall send, for SEVEN YEARS, representatives to the house content to follow in the course of their predecessors, the borough nominees, without one single effective struggle for these measures which are absolutely necessary for the comfort of the people, and the national safety. The term of seven years is too long to invest any man, especially any untried man, with the representation of opinions. * * * Well may the Manchester conservatives desire to return, as a representative, one (Mr. Stanley, now Lord Stanley) who, under the cloak of whiggism, would be found exerting rather formidable talents in resisting those practical reforms, which, by extending the commercial relations of the country, and lessening to the lowest practicable extent its burthens, shall raise it from that gulf of wretchedness, into which the borough owners and the aristocracy have sunk it. No, no! We must have no such members for Manchester. FREE-TRADE, CHEAP GOVERNMENT, PROGRESSIVE REFORM, are what the electors want, and though they hail the bill, as an immense improvement in the representative system, they will give their suffrages to those only who will heartily, and with ability, promote those means of ameliorating the condition of the people."

Manchester was, at last, enfranchised. We have traced its history through a long series of years, during which tranquillity and comfort were only exceptions to the rule of misery, at periods intolerable. It has been shown how, by long and stern teachings in the bitter school of adversity, its inhabitants were slowly convinced that they needed better government to preserve their trade, and even their existence. It has been shown how the despised minority, patient and persevering, became the overwhelming majority.

It has been shown how one reform, to be the instrument in obtaining other necessary reforms, was, at length, triumphantly obtained. To show how that instrument was used, and what part Manchester took in other struggles for measures which ought to have been the very first fruits of the reform act, would be fit occupation for the pen of a competent writer, when, after a little more lapse of time, the further period of excitation can be looked back upon with a calm impartiality becoming the historian.

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER.

SOCIETY TO PUT DOWN LEVELLERS.

ON the 11th of December, 1792, a church and king mob made a furious attack on the printing office of Messrs. Faulkner and Birch; and on the house of Mr. Thomas Walker, as described in my first chapter. The success of those resorts to physical force encouraged the then leading men of Manchester to make a more systematic organization against the reformers. On the following day a meeting was held, and the following resolutions passed:—

“Bull’s Head, Manchester, December 12, 1792.

“An association for preserving constitutional order and liberty, as well as property, against the various efforts of levellers and republicans, entered into at Manchester, the 12th day of December, 1792, upon the principles contained in the following declaration.

“We whose names are hereunto subscribed, seriously considering the affairs of this juncture, and the various efforts of restless, disaffected persons, tending to subvert the happy rights and liberties equally enjoyed by all descriptions of persons under the auspicious protection of a long experience and universally venerated constitution and government, composed of king, lords, and commons,—do determine to form ourselves into an association under the above title, and solemnly engage to afford the most vigorous exertion and support to the executive power of this country in counteracting all attempts of sedition and treason. And for these purposes we declare and resolve as follow:—

“That we will, by every legal measure, endeavour to discover and bring to justice the authors, publishers, and distributors of all seditious and treasonable writings, and especially all persons who shall be engaged in any societies or combinations for the dispersion and promotion of such doctrines.

“That we will, by the distribution of plain and undisguised constitutional principles, endeavour to undeceive such persons as may be misled by the sinister and inflammatory insinuations of designing men.”

"A committee was formed, consisting of James Ackers, John Leaf, and Joseph Hardman, the boroughreeve and constables of Manchester, the magistrates for the hundred of Salford,

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| Nathan Crompton, | Holland Ackers, | Robert Peel, |
| Henry Farrington, | James Radford, | John Simpson, |
| William Major, | Henry Barton, | Lawrence Peel, |
| Samuel Clowes, jun., | William Hall, | Joseph Pickford, |
| James Borron, | Rev. John Gatliff, | Robert Markland, |
| Ashton Ethelston, | Jonathan Beever, | William Douglas, |
| Nathaniel Kirkman, | Nathaniel Milne, | James Bateman, |
| James Broom, | William Barrow, | William Fox, |
| Joseph Bower, | John Ridings, | James Barton, |

and many others.

"Sixty-seven names are attached to the declaration."

The committee appointed lost no time in going to work, for on the same day they made the following orders, offering a strong temptation to spies who could give them information, and thanking the publicans for their declaration as printed in the eighth page of my first chapter.

"Committee Room, Bull's Head, Dec. 12, 1792.

"Orders of the committee of association for preserving constitutional order, liberty, and property, against the various efforts of levellers and republicans.

"At a meeting of the committee this day, James Ackers, Esq., in the chair:—

"*Ordered*,—That John Simpson, Esq., be appointed treasurer to this society; and that Henry Farrington, William Hall, James Barton, Thomas Stott, and William Hodson, be appointed to audit the treasurer's account.

"That the Rev. John Gatliff be appointed secretary to this society, with thanks for his accepting the office.

"*Ordered*,—That ten thousand copies of the declaration and resolutions of the meeting on Tuesday shall be immediately printed.

"That a reward of ten guineas shall be given by this committee to any person or persons who will come forward, and give such evidence as will discover and bring to justice any person or persons guilty of writing, printing, publishing, or dispersing seditious and treasonable writings, books, or papers, or be guilty of any other species of treason or sedition, and particularly those who may have attempted, or shall

hereafter attempt, to seduce any of the soldiers from their allegiance to the king, by circulating any treasonable or seditious doctrines.

“Ordered,—That the thanks of the committee be given to the innkeepers for their laudable conduct in forbidding all seditious meetings to be held at their houses.

“Ordered,—That a person be stationed at the door of the committee room, to interrogate every gentleman whether he is a member of this committee, and to assist the secretary when required; and that he be appointed and paid at the secretary’s discretion.

“Ordered,—That in order to put in force the resolution for the publication of true constitutional principles, a committee of the nine following gentlemen be appointed, viz. :—Samuel Clowes, Esq., Rev. Mr. Sandford, Mr. R. Foxley, Rev. T. Radcliffe, Mr. Charles Lawson, Rev. T. Seddon, Rev. F. Hall, Rev. T. Griffiths, and Mr. F. Williams.”

The society seems to have been afraid of working in broad daylight, as its minutes, also not intended to be seen in the daylight of forty-eight years afterwards, clearly show :—

“Committee Room, December 14, 1792.

“Samuel Clowes, jun., Esq., in the chair ;—

“Ordered,—That every member sign the declaration of secrecy before admittance into the committee room.

“Ordered,—That the thanks of this meeting be given in a handbill to Mr. Martin Marshall and his son, for their endeavour to quell all tumult on Tuesday evening, and to all other gentlemen who were active in the same cause.

“Ordered,—That no attorney of this committee be concerned, either directly or indirectly, in the defence of, or advice concerning, any prosecution that may hereafter be commenced against any person or persons in cases of treason or sedition.”

The latter resolution covered a wider object than appears on its face. No attorney in the body was to defend the prosecuted; any attorney out of the body, guilty of defending a “leveller” was to be persecuted. The next object was to fraternise with and to direct less influential associations.

“Committee Room, December 17, 1792.

“Samuel Clowes, jun., Esq., in the chair ;—

“Ordered,—That the thanks of the committee be given to the members of the Hibernian Society, &c. &c.

"That Mr. Robert Gorton, Mr. Robert Hindley, and Mr. Thomas Norris were proposed as members of the committee.

"*Ordered*,—That the thanks of this committee be given to the innkeepers of Stockport, Bolton, and all neighbouring towns, for their endeavours to prevent seditious meetings and disturbances."

"Committee Room, December 18, 1792.

"Mr. Joseph Tipping in the chair;—

"Messrs. Gorton, Hindley, and Norris elected."

"General Meeting, December 19, 1792.

"Samuel Clowes, Esq., in the chair.

"*Ordered*,—That the thanks of this and the Salford committee shall be given to the Salford association for their offers of co-operation with the resolutions of this society.

"*Ordered*,—That 2,700 copies of the paper, viz., 'Minutes of a conversation at the Royal Oak,' distributed on the 11th of December, be paid for at the expense of this association.

"*Ordered*,—That something be prepared by the committee of papers, in order to counteract any bad effects which may arise from Mr. Samuel Greg's misrepresentation."

"Committee Rooms, Bull's Head, Dec. 20, 1792.

"Dr. White in the chair;—

"*Ordered*,—That copies of the several papers published by this association be sent from time to time to the Rev. Mr. Faweett, of Oldham, to be distributed there at his direction; and that the secretary write to him accordingly.

"*Ordered*,—That the thanks of the committee be given to Robert Peel, Esq., M.P., for the very handsome manner in which he defended the Manchester association *against the unfounded attack* of Mr. Greg, in the House of Commons, on Monday, the 17th of this month."

"Committee Room, December 21, 1792.

"Mr. James Cooke in the chair;—

"In consequence of a letter sent to the chairman by a society under the title of 'Church and King Club,' held at the Weavers' Arms, Cockpit-hill, it was ordered that two members of this committee, viz., Mr. Phethean and Mr. T. Norris, shall wait upon that society with the association book, for their signatures, on Monday next."

And now commenced the proceedings which ruined Faulkner and Birch, and put down their paper :—

“ Committee Room, Dec. 24, 1792.

“ Mr. M. Boardman in the chair ;—

“ Read a letter from Robert Peel, Esq., to Dr. White.

“ *Ordered*,—That a paper called the *Manchester Herald*, of Dec. 22, 1792, be recommended to the consideration of the committee on papers.

“ *Ordered*,—That Messrs. Milne and Serjeant be requested to send Falkner's last paper to Messrs. Chamberlain and White, Solicitors to the Treasury, and to desire they will give such opinion as they may think proper as to the legality of it.”

“ Committee Room, January 7, 1793.

“ Rev. R. Sandford in the chair ;—

“ *Ordered*,—That 2000 copies of the publication called ‘ *Equality* ’ be printed by Mr. Wheeler, at the expense of the committee.”

“ Committee Room, January 14, 1793.

“ Rev. J. Griffith in the chair ;—

“ *Ordered*,—That two publications sent by Butterworth Bayley, Esq., be laid before the committee of papers.”

Thirty-four persons are thus marked out for persecution, and, if possible, for prosecution. The list includes the names of some of the most respectable, both as regards station and character, of the then inhabitants of Manchester :—

“ Committee Room, January 17, 1793.

“ Samuel Clowes, Esq., in the chair ;—

“ *Ordered*.—That the magistrates acting for the Manchester district be requested to summon the following persons to appear before them as soon as possible, and to take the oath of allegiance to his majesty King George the Third :—

Thomas Walker, merchant.

W. Hibbert, merchant.

Thomas Cooper, whitster.

Samuel Greg, merchant.

Richard Roberts, merchant.

T. Robinson, merchant.

Thomas Bateman, cotton dealer.

Rev. M. Hawkes, Princess-st.

Thomas Kershaw, calico printer.

T. Nightingale, Fountain-street.

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| Mr. Seddon, attorney-at-law. | John Grimshaw, merchant. |
| Richard Walker, merchant. | M. Grimsted, schoolmaster. |
| G. Wakefield, merchant. | G. Duckworth, attorney-at-law. |
| S. Hardman, merchant. | — Ogden, surgeon. |
| R. Norris, merchant. | J. Ford, tinman. |
| R. Collier, surgeon. | G. Salvin, merchant. |
| S. O. Birch, Manchester. | — Rees, calico printer. |
| George Philips, merchant. | John Ainsworth, merchant. |
| Samuel Jackson, cotton dealer. | — Priestley, merchant. |
| William Rigby, jun., merchant. | John Fort, calico printer. |
| Mr. Paul, paper stainer. | — Mounsey, merchant. |
| Ottiwell Wood, merchant. | Allan Jackson, cotton dealer. |

The following, from a society every member of which was bound to keep its proceedings secret, is a very rich specimen of impudence :—

“January 24th, 1793.

“Samuel Clowes, Esq., in the chair ;—

“*Ordered*,—That the following advertisement be published in the Manchester papers :—

“Whereas some persons have assembled at different times under the appellation of a ‘Constitutional Society,’ and have published various resolutions, signed by Thomas Walker and others, as presidents, and Samuel Jackson, as secretary to the said society.

“We, the committee of an association established at a public meeting upon real constitutional principles, do call upon the members of that society to publish their names and places of abode, for we think it highly necessary that those should be known who have taken so much pains to *enlighten the minds of the people*, by recommending to their particular attention a book published by Thomas Paine, entitled ‘The Rights of Man,’ a publication of most seditious tendency, and which has been proved by a British jury to be a libel upon government. Who have also entered into a correspondence with the Jacobin Club of Paris, the avowed enemies of religion and of kings, which acts directly contradict their pompous declaration and reputed assertions, that a reform in the lower house of parliament is their only object, and that they have assumed the title of ‘Constitutional Society,’ to impose upon the ignorant and unwary, and to overturn that very constitution they pretend to support. The committee likewise beg leave to put the following queries to Mr. Thomas Walker :—

“Whether his appearance, as a principal in these transactions, has not been the means of exasperating the people against him; and whether the attack upon his house may not be attributed to that cause?”

“By what acts have any of the respectable inhabitants of this town deserved the opprobrious epithets of ‘the Enemies of Freedom and the Friends of Despotism?’

“As to the still more opprobrious term of an ‘unprincipled faction,’ which Mr. Walker has likewise thought proper to apply to some of his townsmen in his letter to his friends and fellow-citizens at Sheffield, when the Constitutional Society have published their names, the public will have an opportunity of judging who best deserve that appellation.

“*Ordered*,—That the committee of papers meet on Tuesday at eleven o’clock, and that Mr. Starkie’s sermon be taken into consideration.”

A law was had to put down what were called “corresponding societies,” and thus to put down the reform principles which those associations advocated. It will be seen by the following minutes that this loyal and secret Manchester society, established to put down reform principles, was not to be bound by legal enactments:—

“January 26th, 1793.

“Dr. White in the chair;—

“*Ordered*,—Read the depositions of Martin Marshall, Mr. Tate, jun., and James Hallows, with Mr. Topping’s opinion thereupon.”

“January 31st, 1793.

“Rev. R. Sandford in the chair;—

“*Ordered*,—That Mr. Dauntsey Hulme be requested to present the Moravians with the thanks of this society.

“Read, a letter signed ‘Amicus.’

“*Ordered*,—That Mr. Webster be requested to make all the inquiries possible respecting the information given by ‘Amicus.’

“N. Gould unanimously elected a member of the committee.

“John Griffith, Secretary.”

“February 7th, 1793.

“Samuel Clowes, Esq., in the chair;—

“Rev. Mr. Derby unanimously elected.

“*Ordered*,—That the thanks of this meeting be transmitted to the boroughreeve and constables of this town for their very proper and

spirited conduct respecting Mr. T. Walker's answer to the letters of condolence from the Constitutional Society at Sheffield, and that the same be published in the three Manchester papers."

"October 22nd, 1794.

"James Entwistle in the chair ;—

"*Resolved*,—That Mr. Harrop be paid at the expense of this committee for nine copies of the 'Report of the Committee of Secrecy of both Houses of Parliament.'

"Read, a letter from Mr. Paynter respecting some expenses incurred in obtaining evidence against several seditious persons."

"April 7th, 1795.

"At a meeting of the Association for Protecting Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers,

"John Kearsley, Esq., in the chair ;—

"*Resolved*,—That the several loyal associations co-operating with this society be entered upon the books in the following order :—1, The Crown and Cushion ; 2, Black Moor's Head ; 3, York Minster ; 4, The Grapes ; 5, The King, Oldham-street ; 6, St. Michael's ; 7, The Union ; 8, Rose and Crown ; 9, White Lion ; 10, King's Arms, Turner-street ; 11, Queen Anne, Red Bank ; 12, Crown and Shuttle.

"That five gentlemen be appointed delegates to attend the monthly meetings of the united delegates from the other loyal associations.

"That the following gentlemen, viz., Mr. Kearsley, Mr. T. Stott, Mr. R. Yates, Mr. Thackeray, and Mr. Webster, be the delegates from this association for the succeeding month."

"Bull's Head, Dec. 6, 1795. (Sunday!)

"John Sedgwick, Esq., in the chair ;—

"Mr. John Barton and Mr. Knowell Stott admitted members of this association.

"*Resolved*,—That the thanks of this meeting be given to Mr. H. Farrington and Mr. C. Marriott (the boroughreeve and one of the constables), to Mr. Leaf and Mr. Richardson, for having waited upon Mr. George Philips (in the absence of Mr. Lloyd) respecting the call of the public, to take (what is unjustly termed) the sense of the town and neighbourhood of Manchester on the question of the bills pending in parliament against seditious meetings, and for the preservation of our gracious sovereign.

“Resolved,—That every support possible shall be given by this meeting to the other loyal associations on Monday, the 7th instant.

“Resolved,—That this and the other loyal associations be requested to meet at the New Market Hall, to-morrow morning (the 7th inst.) at ten o’clock.

“Resolved,—That James Ackers, Esq., be requested to take the chair at the meeting of the loyal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood, agreeably to the preceding resolution.

“Resolved,—That the address to his majesty and petition to the House of Lords, brought forward by the committee of papers, be approved of by this association, with such alterations (if any shall be hereafter required) as that committee shall think necessary.

“Resolved,—That public notice of the meeting be given by a handbill, as now prepared, and that 4000 copies be ordered to be printed.

“Resolved,—That 2000 copies of the notice, that the address and petition are lying for signature at the several places mentioned in the notice be printed.

“Resolved,—That the address and petition be printed.”

“Bull’s Head, Dec. 7, 1795.

“John Sedgwick, Esq., in the chair;—

“Mr. Dodgson and Mr. Robert Hindley, jun., admitted members of this association.

“Resolved,—That the Duke of Bridgewater and the Right Hon. Lord Grey de Wilton be requested to present the petition to the House of Lords, and that the address to his majesty be transmitted to the county members.”

“Bull’s Head, February 17th, 1797.

“Mr. Edge in the chair;—

“Received the following resolution from the general delegates:—

“Resolved,—That this meeting fully concurs with the measure recommended by the ‘Loyal Association of the Bull’s Head.’

“In consequence of the above, it was

“Resolved,—That a general meeting of the society be summoned to attend the general delegation of the several loyal associations at seven o’clock on Wednesday evening next, for the purpose of determining upon an address to all well-wishers of their king and constitution, in the towns and neighbourhood of Manchester and Salford, on the propriety of immediately forming an armed volunteer corps for their internal defence.

*“Resolved,—*That Mr. Leaf, Mr. Joseph Hardman, Mr. Gatliff, Mr. Hindley, Mr. Foxley, Mr. Serjeant, and Mr. Baldwin, be requested to draw up the heads of such address.

*“Resolved,—*That Mr. John Milne be admitted a member of this association.”

“Bull’s Head, February 22nd, 1797.

“Mr. Leaf, chairman;—

“That the address to the people now read be approved.”

“Bull’s Head, January 8th, 1798.

“Mr. Kearsley, chairman;—

*“Resolved,—*That Mr. Hall, Mr. Foxley, Mr. R. Yates, Mr. Tetloe, and Mr. Kearsley be appointed delegates to the united meetings of the several loyal associations; and that other members of this society be at liberty to attend them in the business of the delegation.

“That for the purposes of this association, a third subscription is necessary, and that the same be entered into without delay.”

“July 3rd, 1799.

“There being only six members present, viz., Mr. Kearsley, Mr. Stott, Mr. Hall, Mr. Foxley, Mr. Harrop, and Mr. Gatliff, a committee could not be formed.”

THE MANCHESTER PITT CLUB.

The events of 1812 having shown the Manchester obstructives that they could no longer control and direct public assemblages of the inhabitants, they resolved to form a Pitt Club, the committee of which could carry on the operations of the defunct society to put down levellers and republicans; while the annual dinner, commemorating the birth of the “heaven-born minister,” would be a safe occasion to utter their loyal and anti-reform sentiments. The following are the resolutions passed at a meeting held at the Star Inn, on the 10th of December, 1812:—

“That a society be instituted at Manchester, under the name of the Pitt Club, for the purpose of celebrating the birth-day of that great, patriotic, and illustrious statesman, the Right Honourable

William Pitt, and that the members do meet annually on every 28th of May; and that the first meeting be holden upon the 28th of May, 1813.

"That any person desirous of becoming a member shall be proposed by a member of the club, at a general meeting then next succeeding; and that the gentleman proposing any new member shall declare that he knows the person proposed to be well affected to the king and constitution, and that he approves of the political principles of the late Right Honourable William Pitt.

"That the proposal of each person as a candidate shall be seconded, and such candidate, provided he shall have five-sixths of the balls in his favour, be declared duly elected.

"That each member shall wear a medal, suspended by a blue ribbon, at the anniversary dinner, such medal to be provided by the committee for that purpose, and the medal to be paid for by each member on delivery—viz., £2 2s.

"That the following gentlemen do constitute the original members of the club."

The names of 192 gentlemen follow, amongst whom were the following clergymen:—

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Rev. H. Delve, | Rev. J. Holdsworth, | Rev. J. Hodgkinson, |
| „ John Clowe, | „ Joseph Bradshaw, | „ C. Huthersall, |
| „ C. W. Ethelston, | „ W. C. Cruttenden, | „ Henry Fielding, |
| „ John Gatliff, | „ Robinson Elsdalc, | „ W. B. Guest, |
| „ T. Gaskell, | „ J. H. Mallory, | „ John Hunter, |
| „ Jer. Smith, | „ J. T. Allen, | „ E. B. Shaw, |
| „ C. Wray, | „ R. H. Whitelock, | „ B. Johnson, |
| „ Thos. Hodgson, | „ Thos. Blackburn, | „ N. German, |
| „ Moses Randall, | „ Wm. Johnson, | „ W. Fox, |
| „ E. W. Keyt, | „ W. Cotton, | „ C. Prescott. |
| „ W. R. Hay, | | |

The greater part of the toasts at the anniversary dinners were too grossly indelicate to be printed at the present day. Amongst those of another class we find, in 1813, "The Land we live in, and may those who don't like it leave it;" in 1814, "Protestant Ascendancy," and "Chastisement and Humiliation to that Government which arrogantly raised its feeble arm against this Country when fighting for the Liberty of the World;" in 1815, "Protestant Ascendancy,"

and "The best Process to bleach the Tri-Colour White." On the 15th of January, 1817, the following resolution was passed:—

"That a select committee be formed for the purpose of preparing, printing, and circulating suitable political tracts, in order to counteract the poisonous effects of the various efforts which the disaffected have so recently and fully manifested; and that the following gentlemen be appointed a committee—viz.: the Rev. Dr. Smith, Rev. Cecil Wray, Rev. J. T. Allen, Rev. Moses Randall, Mr. Simmons, Rev. John Gatliff, Rev. Robinson Elsdale, Mr. Joseph Green, Mr. Thomas Jackson, Rev. C. W. Ethelston, Mr. F. Phillips, Mr. John Pooley, Mr. Thomas Hardman, Mr. E. Chesshyre, Mr. P. Crompton, Dr. Bardsley, M.D., Mr. John Wheeler, Mr. Bell, Rev. W. R. Hay, Mr. James Watkins, Mr. James Norris, Robert Peel, Esq., and Mr. Robert Hindley."

A collection of the tracts published would form amusing reading at the present day. The toasts and sentiments continued to mark the subjects that successively occupied the attention of the club:—

1817.—"May the Dream of Universal Suffrage and Annual Parliaments no longer disturb our repose." "The able advocate of the Protestant Cause—The Right Hon. Robert Peel." "Suspension to all cart-politicians." "May political errors find forgiveness, political crimes punishment." "May the language of sedition blister the tongue that utters it." "Reformation to modern reformers."

1818.—"The Protestant Ascendancy." "The distinguished Secretary for Ireland—The Right Hon. Robert Peel, the approved supporter of our constitution in Church and State." "The Electors of Great Britain—May they ever distinguish between the empty sound of patriotism and the solid sense of it." "The Magistrates of the Division, with thanks for their past and confidence in their future services." "May the British Constitution endure like the oak and its enemies fall like its decayed leaves."

1821.—"The Committee of Magistrates." "Mr. Hay and the Magistrates of the Division, with thanks for their past and confidence in their future services." "Major Birley and the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry Cavalry, with thanks to them for their past and confidence in their future services. "May the Energies of the Loyal always defeat the Attempts of the Factious."

Many of the members seem to have tired of these annual eating and drinking demonstrations. At a general meeting held 7th April, 1826, the following resolutions were passed :

“That ever since the institution of this club the number of its members has progressively increased, and yet the attendance at the annual celebration has considerably declined, so that more than three-fourths of the whole body have really been absent on several of those occasions.”

“That such repeated proofs of inattention of those periodical assemblies (appointed as they were for the social expression of our acknowledged principle and sentiment) materially prejudice the spirit and character of the institution, and at the same time indicate a great want of respect to the President, who obligingly undertakes the arduous duties of that situation at the request of the club.”

Amongst the toasts at the annual dinner on the 29th of May, 1826, was, “Captain Grimshaw, a zealous promoter of the principles of the Pitt Club.” His promotion of those principles was the concoction of toasts which, in our more fastidious days, would be considered as an outrage on common decency. The acknowledgment of his peculiar services does not seem to have arrested the downward progress of the association. At the annual meeting, held 5th of April, 1827, the following resolution was passed :—

“That it appears to be the prevailing sentiment of the members present, ‘That under the existing circumstances the usual meeting of the club for the purpose of dining be not held this year.’ And notice of an intended resolution to that effect being now given, the subject be taken into consideration at the said annual meeting on 3rd of May.”

At the meeting on the 3rd of May the following minute was made :—

“The notice of an intended motion for dispensing this year with the usual dinner was immediately withdrawn, the gentleman from whom it proceeded having expressed his decided conviction of the propriety of that course, from the violent and important change of circumstances which had recently taken place in the government of the country.”

The club, however, was fast approaching to its dissolution, as the following resolutions will show :—

"Star Inn, May 13th, 1829.

"*Moved, seconded, and resolved*,—That the annual dinner be postponed to the year 1830.

"Star Inn, Manchester, April 1st, 1830.

"John Powell, Esq., in the chair ;—

"*Resolved*,—That there shall not be any anniversary dinner of the club this year.

"Star Inn, April 7th, 1831.

"Dr. Bardsley in the chair ;—

Resolved,—That at this important crisis of the state of the nation, the following letter be sent to every member of this club without delay :—

"Sir,—You are requested to address a letter to Mr. Chesshyre, the secretary, as early as possible, stating whether you will engage or not to attend the next anniversary dinner, which is intended to take place on Wednesday the 1st of June, in consequence of the birthday happening in the Manchester race week this year."

"Star Inn, May 5th, 1831.

"Dr. Bardsley in the chair ;—

"The proceedings of the meeting of the 7th of April last were read by the chairman. And the result of the circular letters sent to the members pursuant to the resolution to that purpose passed at the last meeting being communicated to the meeting, and it appearing by the answers of the members that twenty-four answers were assenting to the anniversary dinner on the 1st of June next, fifty-three dissentients, and seven dubious.

"*Resolved*,—That in consequence of the above result of the application to members, the anniversary dinner be postponed, and that this meeting do adjourn to the first Thursday in April, 1832."

THE END.

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